INTRODUCTION

[P.145-A]

114
12 THE PRESENT SURVEY was originally written as a thesis for the Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford University and submitted in 1956 for the degree of Bachelor of Letters (B. Litt.). It is difficult, having just completed for publication a monograph based on my own field work, to undertake the publication of a thesis written in student days, dealing with the same area but based on the work of others. It inevitably leads to self-conflict, for the new self does not always agree with the old. Further, the survey does not claim to be comprehensive. It is presented, however, as a first step in the gathering together of the earlier literature that can be best relied upon for information concerning the social structure of the Mbuti Pygmies of the Congo. It has two major objectives.

121
127 One, and the most important, is to set down in English a straightforward description of such ethnographic facts as are known about the Mbuti Pygmies of the Ituri Forest, based on the published and unpublished material available up to 1956, with the addition of a few references up to 1960. For the Putnam material I am most indebted to Mrs. Anne Eisner Putnam, who made available all the notes left by her late husband, Patrick Tracy Lowell Putnam.

121 The other objective is an evaluation of the selected material, a consideration of the problems it raises, and an attempt to resolve some of the more evident contradictions.

114 121 Further reasons for publication of this survey, despite subsequent intensive field research, are, first, that my later field work (1957–1958) was concentrated primarily on making a detailed study of a single hunting band, so there is still no general structural study of the Ituri Pygmies. Also, the results of my more recent study will be better understood in the light of this survey, from which it drew its inspiration.

114 Second, despite the extreme importance of the Mbuti, one of the few remaining hunting and gathering peoples in the world, virtually all the published scientific material is in German, Dutch, or French, with the exception of Schebesta's three early travel books: "Among Congo Pygmies" (1933), "My Pygmy and Negro Hosts" (1936a), and "Revisiting my Pygmy Hosts" (1937). The only original work in English dealing with the Mbuti, up to 1961 in fact,

[P. 145-B]

[P.145-C]

114

was Patrick Putnam's article in "Reader in Anthropology" (1948). For the reader of English, then, some guidance is necessary.

Third, the bulk of the available material is unsatisfactory and requires careful sifting if proper use is to be made of it. Fuller details are given in the section on Source Material (p. 149). Such a preliminary sifting has been attempted in this survey, drawing on my own limited field experience of 1951 and 1954.

Fourth, Schebesta's work in particular, our main source, is, for methodological reasons given in the course of the survey, unsatisfactory for certain types of analysis. This is an evaluation rather than a criticism, for Schebesta's objectives were definite and different from those of contemporary social anthropologists, and he presented his material accordingly. In his presentations it is sometimes difficult to be sure exactly which group of Mbuti he is discussing because he regards them all as a single cultural, sociological entity.[1] This does not by any means totally negate the value of his work, which should be consulted by any student of the area, but certain cautions are essential.

tain cautions are essential. In the present sur- 114
vey I have tried to make Schebesta's material 128
more useful for analytical purposes by culling such information as can be taken specifically to refer to one or another *particular* group of Mbuti. The bulk of such pinpointed information in Schebesta's writings refers to the Efe archers of the southeastern Ituri. This group can then be contrasted with the other major group, the Sua net hunters, for which we have additional sources.

The result is inevitably somewhat disjointed and full of lamentable gaps. There is also the tiresome necessity of continually specifying "according to Schebesta, . . ." "Schebesta says, . . ." "in Schebesta's account, . . ." and I

---

[1] Such an approach is at least better than that of Gusinde, whom we must abandon altogether as a possible ethnographic source because he (1955, 12) holds that all African Pygmies and Pygmoids from the Gabon to Rwanda, and whom he groups together under the single unfortunate term "Twides," *are essentially the same in their mode of living and cultural organization.* It is difficult to see much similarity, I find, between his "Twides" in the Great Lakes region, whom he describes as sedentary grassland potters, and his Ituri "Twides" who are nomadic forest hunters and gatherers.

[P. 145-D]

[p.146-A]

114 122 than confess to leaving out such references wherever it seemed plain that the whole passage referred to that one authority. The impression of inadequacy is heightened by the fact that almost the entire bulk of the material available is general and descriptive rather than specific and analytical. In trying to sift that which falls properly into the latter category, then, we necessarily must abandon the continuity and sense that existed in the original works. It is therefore not to be expected that the present survey will in any way offer a coherent ethnography of the Mbuti.

121 114 (127) Fifth, in the course of the survey (pp. 194-281) I make similar use of the unpublished notes of Patrick and Anne Putnam and expand their account of the net hunters with a limited amount of material from my own field notes dating from 1951 and 1954-1955. My own interests during those two first visits to the Ituri were other than strictly anthropological but concerned certain aspects of social organization. As I was working in the same area as the Putnams, the material is valid and useful for the rounding out of their observations. In

114
121 this way the survey points up the major differences and similarities between the two Mbuti groups (the archers and the net hunters) and opens the way both for more intensive limited studies and for comparative work.

Sixth and last, a survey such as this seems necessary in order to clear the ground of the confusion of contradictions and uncertainties in our present sources. The diversity of opinion, in itself important, proved to be of the utmost significance for my own later field work. Although it is somewhat begging the question, it might be said that only by accepting the contradictions as fact, then seeking a structural means of resolving those contradictions, can we begin to approach the truth of the situation. The survey, in this way, may be taken to point the direction in which further field work is needed. This is as true now, since my own field trip of 1957–1958, as it was then. That trip, concerned mainly with a localized band of net hunters, confirmed much of the general thesis of the present survey concerning the differences between archers and net hunters. However, detailed studies of other bands, both archer and net hunter, are vitally needed if we are to arrive at an understanding of the nature of Mbuti society as a whole and of its relationship with villager society.

[P.146-B]

[P.146-C]

The latter problem, that of the relationship 121
between the two neighboring peoples, is of the
greatest importance and has been subject to the
greatest misunderstanding. It should be emphasized that the opinions cited here, including my
own, are opinions and are to be accepted only
as such. It should also be realized that the situation is by no means static. Not only has the 121
relationship between the Mbuti and the vil- 178
lagers been changing even during the years since
I have known them, but so, in all probability,
has the internal structure of Mbuti society. It
is quite possible that such change has long been
a characteristic of the area, and it is almost certain that the Mbuti-villager relationship has
never been static, which may account for some
of the diversity of opinion, and a general historical perspective undoubtedly helps us to evaluate the rather sketchy material at our disposal.

We have, for instance, a steady regression in 114
factual knowledge of the area from the time of
our earliest Egyptian sources right up to the beginning of the present century, at the turn of
which our ignorance of the African Pygmies was
just about complete, even to disbelief in their

very existence. It is not surprising that the reports of the late nineteenth-century explorers in central Africa should have excited the imagination of sociologists, and particularly of Schmidt (1910). The material available to him was most unsatisfactory. It dwelt mainly on the bizarre, stressed the physical appearance of the Pygmies, the peculiarities of their mode of life, and generally exaggerated normalities into abnormalities with lively imagination. Schmidt was well aware of all this but was nonetheless fascinated by the obvious differences between these people and their taller villager neighbors. His work, and that of his followers, including Schebesta, are colored by this initial interest.

There was a belief that the distinct physical appearance of the Pgymies connoted not only separateness from other races but also unity amongst themselves and anteriority; that is, that the Pygmy races of the world were basically one, anterior to, and "purer" than other races. Here, then, it was thought, one should look for the roots of man's religious belief; this is the second major supposition that determines the nature and format of the work of this school. If we bear this in mind, the work of Schebesta, who was responsible for the first and only complete over-all field survey of the area, is more un-

[P. 146-D]

[P.147-A]

114 derstandable, more valuable, and more usable.

121 An examination of all the available source material indicates very clearly the necessity for immediately establishing a limited study of well-defined groups, uninfluenced by any theoretical preoccupations with questions of sociological unity, anteriority, or origin. The term "Pygmy" leads far too easily to meaningless [101] generalization. It may well prove that even the term "Mbuti," by which is understood the Pygmy population of the Ituri Forest, is too broad. The breakdown in this survey between the different economic groups of Mbuti is only a tentative investigation to discover significant similarities and differences.

114 122 In view of the existence of Schebesta's (1938, 1941, 1948, 1950) major work, "Die Bambuti-Pygmäen vom Ituri," with its special reference to archers, and my own field work and recent and forthcoming publications on the net hunters, the survey here has been kept to reasonable dimensions and does not pretend to give a complete picture. The accounts of Schebesta and Putnam are presented with as little speculation as possible. It will be readily seen that there is insufficient information, almost throughout, for any effective analysis to be made. But certain problems arise, and in the conclusions some attempt is made to outline these further, particularly the nature of the Pygmy-villager relationship.

[P.147-C]

particular contact situation is not only the remarkable adaptability of the Mbuti to the changing world around them, but also the superficiality of that adaptability, and their much more profound resistance to any influence that strikes into the heart of their forest world and forest life. This, however, is a matter for another work. 177 182

Physical anthropology has been entirely excluded from the survey because of its highly specialized nature. A number of such specialists have worked in the Ituri area, however, notably Gusinde (1942, 1948), Jadin (1936, 1938), and Julien (1934, 1954). Schebesta (1938) has also made a physiometrical study among the Mbuti. 114 14 128

The only changes that have been made in the original survey have been minor literary alterations, the addition of a few footnotes or inserted comments, the addition of one or two post-1956 references, and a revision of the terminology used. For "Efe" and "Sua," for instance, we now use the terms "archer" and "net hunter" respectively, and in place of "Negro" we use "villager," thus stressing throughout the significance of the economic rather than the linguistic or racial differential. 128 114 101 128

SOURCE MATERIAL

[P.149-A]

HISTORICAL SOURCES

114 175 177 One of the most striking things about a survey of ancient and early sources concerning the African Pygmies is the way it shows how, from the time these people first entered the recorded scene, in Egypt of the Sixth Dynasty, our knowledge of them decreased steadily until the late nineteenth century. To the ancient Egyptians the existence of Pygmies was a matter of fact. They are referred to as "Dancers of God" and as dwellers in the "land of trees" (Schebesta, 1933, 17; 1952, 11); they are placed on the southern borders of Sudan. A tomb of the Sixth [101] Dynasty at Beni Hassan bears a painting of representatives of conquered nations, among which is a perfectly recognizable likeness of a Pygmy, designated Aka—a name by which the northernmost Pygmies are still known today. Yet, until the turn of the present century, the modern Western world believed the Pygmy to be a myth. From Beni Hassan the scene shifts to the Pompeian parietal paintings which depict typical Pygmy scenes, with a forest camp of beehive-shaped huts, and also a scene showing Pygmies along the Nile.

114
175
171

Herodotus (1866, vol. 2, sect. 32) in the fifth century B.C. reports an expedition of Nasamonians to discover the source of the Nile. They cross a vast desert and, while resting at an oasis, are captured by diminutive men, "under the middle height."

Homer (1864, vol. 3, 3–7) introduces an element of myth when he talks of fighting between the cranes and the "Pygmaean race" to the south, but Aristotle (1910, vol. 8, sect. 2) sees fit, for some reason, to assert quite categorically that Pygmies do in fact live in the land "from which flows the Nile"; he adds that they live in caves.

An isolated reference in the sixth century comes from the Emperor Justinian's ambassador who, on his way to Ethiopia, on an island off the east African coast, came across a tribe of Pygmies speaking an unknown language (unknown even to local inhabitants). That is about the last reference to Pygmies as human beings for some 10 centuries. In the fourteenth century the cartographer who drew up the Hereford Mappa Mundi still placed the Pygmies near the

[P 149-B]

[P.149-C]

source of the Nile, although in his secondary 174
role as theologian he depicted them as monsters, 175
with their faces in their breasts or their heads 177
below their shoulders. He labels them as troglodytes.

Battel (1625, vol. 2, 983) refers to the existence of a nation of dwarfs and places them in the land of the Yobbi, north of the Sette River. He calls them "Dongo," and it is in this area where Du Chaillu (1867, 1890) discovered the "Obongo" Pygmies in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Other seventeenth-century reports by Portuguese explorers describe what seem to be relatively pure Pygmy races who apparently brought ivory down to the west coast traders. Unfortunately, these explorers had vivid imaginations and interspersed their descriptions with most unlikely information, such as the power of these little people to become invisible, the only explanation they could

find for how the Pygmies could kill elephant. In 114
this way belief in the existence of real Pygmy 175
races in Africa was only further discredited; 177
so much so that an anatomist named Tyson obtained a skeleton of one of these fabulous beings and, after careful examination, wrote a treatise (Tyson, 1699) showing that it was quite clear that "Pygmies" were, in fact, not human beings but apes. He had good grounds for this assertion, because the skeleton he examined, and which survived until recently at the British Museum (Natural History) in South Kensington, England, was that of a chimpanzee. He rounds off his discourse in the following general terms: "The most diligent enquiries of late into all parts of the inhabited world could never discover any such puny diminutive race of mankind." His explanation of the "fables" was that travelers had mistaken apes for men (Windle, 1894).

From the seventeenth century to the nineteenth there seems to have been a complete silence. Then follows a succession of explorers, travelers, administrators, and anthropologists who finally established the fact that Pygmies did exist and were, indeed, human. But that, and their approximate distribution, is about all they do tell us. Well into the twentieth century we get fanciful adventurers seriously observing

[P. 150-A]

114 apes swinging about in the treetops and de-
175 scribing them as Pygmies.

177 The material provided by these nineteenth-
century explorers is valuable, however, for an
114 understanding of contemporary writings. Some
175 of them, such as Speke (1864) and Stanley
101 (1879, 1890), made little more than passing
reference to the "dwarfs," as they were usually called. Schweinfurth (1874) is generally acknowledged as being the first to establish beyond a doubt that there was indeed a race of such people in central Africa and to give us some real information about them, particularly concerning the association of the Aka (northernmost) Pygmies, as mercenary soldiers, with the Mangbetu tribe. He was also among the first to throw in some of the many "red herrings" that have distracted even the most recent anthropologists from a strictly scientific study of the people, leading them into the speculative realms of origin, connection between Pygmies and the Bushmen of South Africa, and degree of originality of Pygmy culture.

Others, such as Casati (1891), Le Roy (1897),
•114 Burrows (1898), Johnston (1884, 1902, 1903,
101 1905, 1908), David (1904a, 1904b), Hutereau
175 (1924), Powell-Cotton (1907), and Czekanow-
181 ski (1922), to mention only a very few, give further details that are of interest but cover such a wide area as to make it impossible to gather any but the most superficial notion of a generalized "African Pygmy." When these sources provide us with factual observations, the facts are often not untainted with imagination. When they go beyond facts, additional "red herrings" are cast up, such as the silent trade between Pygmies and villagers, the lawlessness of Pygmy society, the Pygmies' complete lack of religion, and their ferocity and cannibalism. To add fuel to the fire, equally imaginative interpretations show them as having reciprocal and open trade relationships with the villagers, as living an ordered life according to their "natural instincts" for law and order, as following a monotheistic mystical religion, and as living a gentle and peaceful existence. According to this material, the "Pygmies" do have their own language and they do not, their way of life is totally different from that of their villager neighbors and it is a direct copy of villager life, they live in the heart of the forest and they live on the edge of the villages. These are just some of the contradictions that make it

[P.150-C]

impossible to form any single coherent picture. 114 101 181 175

When Schmidt wrote "Die Stellung der Pygmäen-völker in der Entwicklungsgeschichte der Menschen" in 1910, all these contradictions were his source material. Pygmies existed, but they still had tails and were flying about from treetop to treetop, or else they were crawling on their bellies like snakes to enter their diminutive houses. Quatrefages (1887) and Le Roy (1897) had, at the end of the nineteenth century, attempted to draw together what was known about Pygmies all over the world, but Schmidt's study is the first work of real importance. He confines himself mostly to the African Pygmies and Bushmen and pursues two lines of thought: first, the relationship of both to Asiatic Pygmies; and second, the place of the Pygmy, both racially and anthropologically, in the evolution of the human race. Was the Pygmy the original inhabitant of the equatorial forests of Africa, or was he a degeneration of present Bantu stock—a throwback? These "red herrings" are still being diligently pursued, while the Pygmies and their social structure have gone unstudied by any anthropologist except with reference to these problems.

with reference to these problems. The one contemporary work of any real note, "Die Bambuti-Pygmäen vom Ituri," is the result of research undertaken by Schebesta (1938, 1941, 1948, 1950), who was undoubtedly strongly influenced by the Schmidt school of thought, and was preoccupied with the problems of the origin and cultural unity of the Pygmies and of their racial and anthropological separateness from the villagers. 114 101

The problem of the relationship between the African and the Asian Pygmies, opened by Quatrefages in 1887, was followed up by Le Roy (1897), Schmidt (1910), Eickstedt (1934), Nippold (1936, 1937), Gusinde (1942), and Schebesta (1938, 1952). The problem itself does not concern us here, except in so far as preoccupation with it in these sources affects our evaluation of them and explains their tendency to generalize in terms of "Pygmy" or "Bambuti" culture and society.

We must ask ourselves what use can be made of all this material in a serious study of the African Pygmies, particularly as there is such a dearth of reliable contemporary material. At first sight we seem to be in possession of an abundant supply of raw material, even if we limit ourselves to the Pygmies of central 114

[P. 151-A]

114 Africa. Until the early twentieth century there are some 30 sources that seem to contain reliable information concerning not only the Ituri Pygmies but those of equatorial Africa and the central Congo area. In each of these sources we are given information as to the alleged origin of these particular Pygmies, tribal groupings and distribution, migrations, and other data. We also get fairly full and reliable information as to economic activities, particularly various hunting techniques. Technology is moderately well dealt with; social and political life is presented in a series of categorical but conflicting assertions; and religious life is frequently mentioned, but usually in such vague terms that the information is useless.

From a consideration of the material as a whole, one thing emerges: while certain points of correspondence, mainly technological, can be found throughout, superficially evidencing some uniformity of culture, the contradictions of evidence found within any one area are far more striking. These contradictions are present in all fields—social, economic, political, and religious.

114 [101] If we were not dogged by this notion of the "Pygmies" as one people, supported by their undoubted racial homogeneity and territorial contiguity, we would certainly think we were dealing with a number of totally different social systems, if not different peoples.

The more unreliable and imaginative sources have already been rejected, and we must accept the remaining information as given, however much it contradicts itself. The only alternative is to reject this material *in toto*, and there is certainly no justification for so doing other than the convenience of avoiding the contradictions. 114 101 128 It seems preferable to accept the contradictions without trying to unify the facts. That is to say, a thorough summary of these early sources indicates that we are by no means dealing with a single people, even within as limited an area as the Ituri Forest or, indeed, one section of it. This consideration has affected the format of the present work and its limitation to a specific section of the African Pygmies. Reference to facts to be found in the early sources are made only when it is certain that they apply to the particular Pygmies under discussion. This method seems to be the only valid way of utilizing the material. It reduces the bulk of ethnographic evidence considerably, as it is seldom made clear exactly which group of Pygmies is

[P 151-B]

[P. 151-C]

114
[101]
[128]

under discussion, and the material nowhere deals with any one specific group fully.

Having spent some time examining a large body of literature, one is naturally loath to make so little use of it, but this demonstration of the need for detached localized studies rather than generalized studies concerned with or dominated by the notion of racial and cultural unity is in itself no small contribution. The extent to which one must localize sociological studies among the Ituri is as yet unknown, but some indication will appear in the following work.

It might be added that Schebesta, who made an exhaustive study of these same sources, also found himself unable to make a great deal of use of them. He (1948, 295) criticizes Hutereau, whom he regards as being one of the most important sources, for generalizing from one group to another (though Hutereau was mainly concerned with the Aka). He regards the others as even less reliable, and most of his references to them are accompanied by cautions as to their trustworthiness.

[P.152-A]

102
114
131
133

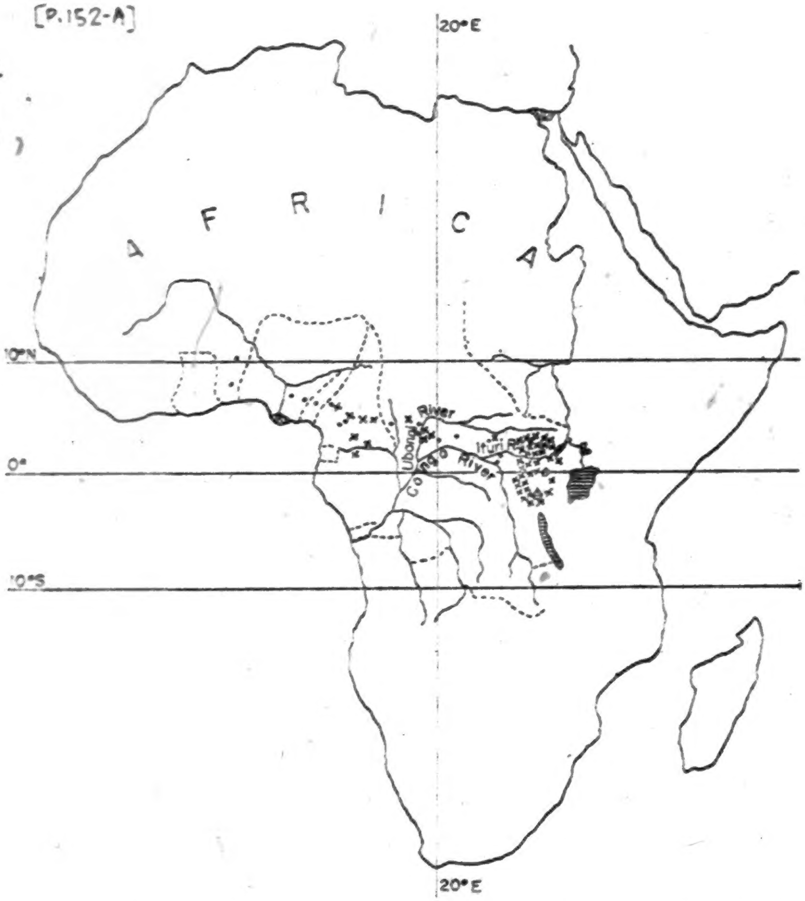

20°E
AFRICA
10°N
0°
10°S
Ubangi River
Congo River
Ituri River
20°E

FIG. 1. Map showing extent of personal knowledge of Pygmy groups according to accounts heard *in situ* or through personal contact made during the author's 1957–1958 field trip, not covering the central and southern Congo. Circles indicate accounts of Pygmy or Pygmoid hunting bands; crosses, actual contact.

have a concentrated body of Mbuti Pygmies in 101
the Ituri Forest and some apparently scattered 128
Pygmy groups farther west and through the
forests of equatorial Africa (Figs. 1–2). Of the
latter, unfortunately, too little is known for inclusion here.

For the Ituri Mbuti one of our main sources 101
is the four-volume work by Schebesta (1938, 114
[P. 152-B] 127

101 1941, 1948, 1950). Schebesta divides the Mbuti
114 (whom he calls "Bambuti") into three major
[127] groups: Aka in the north, Sua in the south, and
Efe in the east (Fig. 3). His first trip to the Ituri was spent in an over-all coverage of the forest, during which he culled facts from all these groups but necessarily at a superficial level. Realizing this and desiring to make a more profound study, he returned and concentrated on the Efe in the triangle bounded by the roads joining Mambasa, Irumu, and Beni (Fig. 3). The bulk of his work concerns these Efe, who hunt primarily with bow and arrows, and as it is the only group of which he has detailed knowledge it is the only group that we present from his work with any degree of fullness. His references to the Kango in the west, the Aka, and the Sua, are too few to form a systematic account of these societies as such, and, as already mentioned, we see little value in isolated, unsystematic ethnographic data.

[P. 153-B]

There is, however, another source on the 114
Ituri Pygmies (mostly unpublished) in the 127
form of the field notes of an American anthropologist,
Patrick Putnam, who first went to the
Ituri in 1928 and was resident there until his
death at the end of 1953. His material is concerned [101]
with the Sua who, unlike the Efe, are net
hunters. With this material are also the notes
of his widow, Mrs. Anne Eisner Putnam, who
lived in the Ituri for more than eight years,
until 1954; and, finally, my own field notes
covering my first two visits to the same area
(Epulu District) in 1951 and 1954. I combine 127
this material as a single source, indicating its 128
exact origin in the text, partly because, in the
main, it covers one definite area, and even one
definite hunting band, and partly because both
Anne Putnam and myself benefited by the immense
knowledge of Patrick Putnam, without
necessarily being in complete agreement.

Apart from these two main sources, and a 127

[P. 153-C]

[P.155-A]

127 related to either of these economic groups of
128 Mbuti—archers or net hunters. When sources cannot be related to our detailed study of these two types, we omit them, unless there is some special reason for their inclusion.

128 Now, before the survey itself, it is necessary
• 114 to evaluate briefly our two main sources, as certain deficiencies in each should be understood. The more properly critical section follows the survey; here such criticism as is presented is offered so that we can estimate the true nature and value of the facts presented by each source.

SCHEBESTA

114 Schebesta, as a follower of Schmidt, is concerned with the over-all problem of "the pygmy races of the world" and their interrelationship. He began his study among the Semang Negritos in 1924. Then in 1929 he undertook the first of three trips to Africa on which he based his work "Die Bambuti-Pygmäen vom Ituri." The first trip, lasting a year and a half, was spent traveling through the Ituri "*sur des pistes caravanières . . . dans toutes les directions*" (Schebesta, 1952, 16) in order to get an all-over picture of all the Mbuti and to "*établir leur unité de race et de structure sociale*" (Schebesta,

114 1952, 16). This admission, I think, is sufficient to indicate one of Schebesta's weaknesses, his obsession with this notion of cultural unity. To set out to establish a unity of social structure among a virtually unknown people scattered through thousands of square miles of forest is hardly commendable as scientific procedure. It [101] results, as one might expect, in his loose usage throughout his works of the terms "Bambuti" and "Pygmy," thus always implying that there are no significant differences between the Mbuti of one part of the forest and those of another, or between Mbuti who utilize one form of hunt and those who follow another. Further, Schebesta is constantly concerned with differentiating the Pygmies from the villagers. He looks for original traits in Pygmy culture that will evidence their separateness from the villager as well as their unity among themselves. (Any similarities he then ascribes to assimilation.) Nowhere do we find Schebesta interested in a society as such; it must be related to his own problems of cultural unity and distinctness of race. He himself (1947, 181, footnote 1) writes, "The object of my explorations was to

[P.155-8]

[p.155-C]

stress [pick out?] that which was pygmy."[1] 114

Schebesta's division of the Ituri Pygmies into three linguistic groups is another result of his preoccupation with the problem of the separateness of the Pygmy and villager and the alleged anteriority of the former. He sets out to find an original Pygmy language and claims to have found it among the Efe archers. For this reason he regards them as the "purest" Mbuti. He also, of necessity, believes that their culture is the purest, being least affected by contact with the villagers. Yet from his account it is plain that the Pygmies he describes live in far closer association with neighboring villagers than do other Pygmy groups elsewhere in the Ituri Forest. This whole question of origin and anteriority is so highly speculative, resting, as it must, largely on conjecture, that again we prefer our own more factual basis of classification according to hunting technique, if only as a temporary measure, until we have sufficient information to make a classification according to structural principles. 114 97 101 114 177 [194]

[1], [See footnote, bottom of p.155-D --Analyst]

But there is a further and even more important criticism to be made of Schebesta's work,[1] especially his field-work technique. His first trip was avowedly to make an all-over survey and to map the delimitations of Pygmy territory in the Ituri. He can then be excused the superficiality of his observations on social structure as published (Schebesta, 1933) in an English version and a German edition (Schebesta, 1932). He himself recognized the need for a more detailed and localized study, and his second trip, in 1934, was undertaken with this object in view. In his account of this trip (Schebesta, 1936b, 1937) in another work designed for the general public but nonetheless revealing, he tells quite plainly how he sets about making this study. The only way to get to know Pygmy life thoroughly, Schebesta (1937, 30) says is to live right in a Pygmy camp: " . . . the urgent problems to be solved forthwith, and as often as it was necessary to seek a new camp, were: a. Where would I find pygmies *in sufficient numbers;* b. Where would *I* find a suitable camping ground; c. What would I do to win the confidence of *my little hosts?* [italics mine]."

Evidently then the camps in which Sche-

---

[1] *"Relever ce qui est propre aux pygmées, tel fut le but de mes explorations."*

[P. 155-D]

[P.156-A]

114 besta worked are quite artificial, in that they grew up around him on a site of his own choosing. Further, he relies on neighboring villagers to send in "their" Pygmies to create "sufficient numbers." There is no certainty that the members of any of these camps even come from the same hunting band. He certainly gives us no comprehensive genealogies throughout his entire work, so we really have no idea of even the kind of kin groups he is dealing with. Further, while he moves about within a limited area, he combines all his material in such a way that, again, we lose sight of any particular society and find ourselves dealing only with an abstract model of "Efe" society.

One further criticism should be made of Schebesta's field-work technique, which considerably decreases its value from the point of view of the anthropologist. He not only establishes and works in the artificial camps already mentioned, but even within those camps he seems to have been unable to establish the kind of relationships needed for efficient anthropological documentation. This fact does not emerge in his academic writings but is evident throughout his writings for the more general

114 public. He interferes in matters of magico-religious importance with an insensitivity that is not likely to encourage confidence. To give a few examples from "Among Congo Pygmies" (Schebesta, 1933): He enters an old woman's hut, sees a charm lying concealed among the leaves, so seizes it and beats a retreat despite her protests. It is not surprising that "I barely managed to get out into the open with my spoil before all the women of the camp surrounded me with loud wails" (Schebesta, 1933, 77). Again he seems surprised that there should be some trouble because he went around the camp taking hair clippings (Schebesta, 1933, 229), and he quite proudly tells how he planned to rob a grave by building his hut over it (Schebesta, 1933, 222). It is hardly probable that this kind of attitude would have inspired the trust and confidence necessary to secure reliable information.

Schebesta also, not content with having a camp built to suit his convenience, is unwilling to let camp life go its normal (Pygmy) way. In "Revisiting my Pygmy Hosts" (Schebesta, 1937, 211–212), he is obliged to put an end to non-stop gambling by confiscating "not only the beans, but even arrows." He is also unable

[P 156-B]

[P. 156-C]

to allow quarrels to run their natural course: 114.
When his night's rest is disturbed by matrimonial disagreements he "snatches up his gun" to restore peace and quiet (Schebesta, 1933, 96). Sometimes his methods are even cruder: a fight starts over a hen he had accepted without payment, though he intended to pay later. So Schebesta enters the dispute, and "my rattan cudgel crashed among the brown bodies" (Schebesta, 1933, 113). When a villager is reluctant to allow him to stay in his village, Schebesta calmly describes half-choking him with his bare hands (Schebesta, 1933, 118), and when there is trouble in one of his camps on yet another occasion, we find the most basic rules of good field work again being somewhat overlooked (Schebesta, 1933, 89): "At last I deemed it discreet to step forward in the interests of peace and come to his aid. My well meant advice was, however, utterly disregarded; in fact the women became more bloodthirsty and more voluble. At last I lost my temper and charged into the howling mob, knocking them in all directions. I even had to threaten to give one of the amazons a good hiding. This ended the squabble and a sullen silence fell upon the panting mob."

Finally, there is reason to suspect that some of the facts presented with the certainty of an eyewitness account are actually the result either of only casual observation or even of information given by single informants. When dealing with totemism, Schebesta (1937, 143) states that Pygmies do not eat from a vessel that has touched their totem; he then reveals that this statement was based on information from a single informant, which even Schebesta himself thought to be unreliable. In "Die Bambuti-Pygmäen vom Ituri" (Schebesta, 1948, 475), when dealing with the *nkumbi* initiation, he admits: "*Ich habe persönlich nur Ausschnitte vom* Nkumbi *gesehen*"—that he has seen only parts of the *nkumbi* and those only among the Ngwana at Bafwasende, the Byeru, Bali, and the Forest Bira. "These fleeting glimpses ["*Diese nur flüchtigen Einblicke*"; Schebesta, 1948, 475], however, sufficed to confirm to me the information I had gathered from negroes and Bambuti." 114

Boelaert (1936a) makes the same criticism, as does Costermans (1938). Among others, Ivor Evans (1937, vi, 15, 16, 50, 153, 177) has similar criticisms of Schebesta's field work in Malaya.
[P·156-D]

[P.157-A]

114 All this amounts not to a criticism of Schebesta's work as such, but rather to an evaluation of it from the point of view of a social anthropologist. In his work, as in his presentation of the facts, Schebesta was motivated by quite other considerations than those of a social anthropologist, and accordingly we must use his material with care. His facts we can accept with some caution, bearing in mind the remarks just quoted. His theories we cannot accept at all, unless it is with the greatest reserve, in view of the motivation of his work and his admitted preconceived notions as to the racial and cultural autonomy of the Pygmies.

PUTNAM

We must also exercise caution with regard to the Putnam material. All that is published is an article dictated by Patrick Putnam to Carleton S. Coon, who published a condensed version of it (Patrick Putnam, 1948). I myself met Putnam during my first visit to the Congo in 1951.

114 He died just before my return visit in 1954, but later I had an opportunity of spending a summer working on all his personal papers. These, for the most part, consisted of manuscript notes written during his first years in the Ituri Forest, from 1928 onward. They cover northern and eastern stretches of the forest, as well as the central (Epulu) district which came to be his home. The notes were materially in bad condition, having been attacked by both damp and termites. Intrinsically their worth is not so great as might have been hoped, though there are valuable references to conversations with old Pygmies whose memories reached back another generation, giving some historical perspective. More valuable are his notes on the Mbuti relationship with villagers, and notes on these tribes themselves, particularly the Mamvu, Mboli, Bali, Rumbi, and Mangbetu.

Isolated notes and jottings concerning the particular hunting band in whose area Putnam made his permanent headquarters, near the junction of the Epulu and Nduye rivers, prove to be of particular value in giving some idea of the composition of this band over two decades, changes in leadership, and other matters. Also useful in this respect are medical notes which he kept of all the Pygmies he treated and on which he wrote down such kinship information as he could elicit.

Unfortunately, the bulk of Putnam's notes,

[P. 157-B]

[P. 157-C]

with more detailed and systematic studies of the various hunting bands known to him, were lost when his canoe overturned. He would not be persuaded to write again but cooperated with his wife, Anne Putnam, and helped her to systematize her own observations during her eight years in the Epulu District. During his latter years he was crippled, and trained Anne Putnam to observe as an anthropologist. Some of these observations appear in a book compiled from her letters and some of her notes (Anne Putnam, 1954). Although Anne Putnam makes no claim to being an anthropologist, she became an acute and accurate observer and, under her husband's guidance, took some particularly valuable notes regarding the activities of the women's religious association, the initiation of Pygmy boys, marriage customs and ceremonies, and certain activities of the men's religious association. In addition she translated and wrote down some 200 legends as told to her by four members of the hunting group. Her notes also cover other aspects of the social, economic, and political life of this same band, but in less 114

detail. All her work has the indisputable ad- 114•
vantage of being a factual record of personal
observation of a single hunting band over a
period of eight consecutive years. That she is
not an anthropologist is to a great extent
mitigated by the fact that her record confines
itself to her observations, and by the training
she received from her husband. Nonetheless
this factor should be taken into consideration,
particularly as her previous training was as an
artist. This accounts in part for the detailed
and accurate descriptions of what she saw, but
it also accounts for her sometimes highly
imaginative presentation of the facts. For in- 114
stance, when she hears the *molimo* horn at 765
night, she (1954, 84) writes: "Where the 534
Esamba roamed, there went death. Its eerie,
lowing voice was the voice of evil." In fact this,
as well as being a statement of her own inter-
pretation of the *molimo*, is also an accurate
picture of the villager interpretation. It is also 114
significant that she uses specifically village
terms, such as "Esamba" (for the more correct
lusumba or *esumba*). Living as she did among
the villagers as well as among the Pygmies,
Mrs. Putnam was influenced by many of their
notions and not infrequently used the villagers
as informants, though she always states when
the latter is the case. We must then assume that

[P. 157-D]

[P.158-A]

114 some of the "facts" she observes, she presents much as the local villagers would.

114
128 With regard to my own early material, which I add to our sources on the Epulu net hunters, I must also add a caution. My first trip, in 1951, lasting about four months, was primarily concerned with the music of the Mbuti. I was, during almost the entire time, among this same hunting band at the Epulu. My second trip, in 1954, took me through west and equatorial Africa and the Ubangi district of the Congo, so I was able to see Pygmies other than those of the Ituri, but again I concentrated most of my time at the Epulu. I use my own field notes mainly to fill in gaps in the Putnam material and to add two detailed sections on initiation and the men's religious association, here called

114 128 the *molimo*.[1] I was particularly fortunate in obtaining the material I did, and I include it because it helps to fill out the most detailed body of facts available on any single Pygmy hunting band. The fact that all this material does deal with a single band (or is used only in so far as it does) perhaps excuses the somewhat haphazard way in which it has been amassed. Obviously a single field study by one trained anthropologist would be preferable, but it is not available. Inclusion here of the notes on my 1957–1958 field trip would create an imbalance. As it is, the material is used only in the presentation of facts, and there is no reason to doubt their authenticity. If there is any fault in this joint source on the Epulu Mbuti, it is this possible fault of omission rather than any of commission.

101 131 621 [192] The area that this band of Pygmies hunts lies to the north of the Epulu River and west of

---

[1] Much confusion arises through common and loose usage of the term *lusumba* among all villagers of the area. The *lusumba*, also *esumba*, seems to originate as an Ngwana magical ceremony. This is distinct from both the Bira *molimo* and the *molimo* of the Mbuti, although the terms are often used interchangeably by villagers.

[P. 158-B]

[P. 159-A]

ORIENTATION

LOCATION

101 THE PYGMY POPULATION of the world is di-
• 114 vided into two main groups, Asiatic and African, commonly known as Negritos and Negrillos, respectively. These terms originated in what is probably the first serious attempt to study the Pygmies as a whole (Quatrefages, 1887), and the relationship between these two groups has been an issue ever since. It does not concern us here, as our study is confined to the African Pygmies, but reference to this wider issue may be found in Quatrefages (1887), Le Roy (1897), Schmidt (1910), Eickstedt (1934), and Gusinde (1942).

TRIBAL GROUPINGS

121
101 We are concerned essentially with an ethnographic study of known Pygmy groups in Africa, but here again the field is generally considered in terms far too broad to be practical.

betu, Bira, and Lese, respectively. Schebesta 197
believes the Efe dialect to be the remnant of the 101
original Pygmy language, and for this reason he
considers the Efe archers to be culturally the 114 •
purest of the three Mbuti groups. Costermans (1937) disagrees as to both the originality of the Efe language and the purity of Schebesta's particular Efe Mbuti. He asserts that among the Watsa-Gombari Efe, who according to Schebesta were not "true Pygmies," he found hundreds living in exactly the same manner as Schebesta's "true Pygmies."

Jadin (1936) considers that of Schebesta's 101
three groups the Efe and the Sua have remained 144
most faithful to their old way of life and finds 184
that, on grounds of blood groups, the purest Pygmies are those who live farthest from their village neighbors, from whom they are clearly distinguishable by their biochemical index.

The Aka live mostly to the north of the 101
Nepoko River, along the length of the Ituri as 131
far east as Gombari. Thence southward, to the
east of the Nduye, the Efe archers are found. 619
The Sua roam from the Nepoko to the south side of the Ituri River, from Bomili in the west, almost to Mambasa in the east. Detailed information on the Aka is not available, though they seem to make more use of the spear than the other groups.

[P. 159-D]

[P.160-A]

000 the other groups. Our main source on the Efe is
101 Schebesta, whose major field work was carried
114 out in the triangle bounded by the roads joining
128 Irumu, Mambasa, and Beni. Source material on
131 the Sua is almost entirely confined to a band in
the area to the west of the Nduye and north of the Epulu, near the village of Camp Putnam (Fig. 3).

128 Thus the two groups available for study rep-
101 resent not only two of Schebesta's two lin-
184 guistic groups but also the two major hunting
224 techniques used by the Ituri Mbuti. The Efe
are archers, while the Sua are primarily net hunters. It is probable that certain structural differences between the two groups can be accounted for by this difference in economic activity; all such differences are also related to the different degrees of symbiosis between the Pygmies and their village neighbors. What is said of these two groups should be taken to apply within these limited areas only, though it may be found that many of the facts have wider extension.

[P. 161-A]

162 slight excess of females in the composition of the population. He gives the following figures, evidently from a population of 411 adults.

	CHILDREN PER CENT	ADULTS PER CENT	TOTAL PER CENT
Male	48.0	48.9	48.4
Female	52.0	51.1	51.6

[165] Infant mortality (32.7 per cent)
Average age 27–30
9 widowers among 201 men
9 widows among 210 women
14 polygamous families (3.1 per cent)

16 Demographic data for the Sua net hunters is [114] not available. Putnam kept detailed medical records for all members of the band for a decade, but many of these have been lost in the course of shipment to the United States, and the few that are available do not provide a [184] representative picture. From such data as are available, there does not seem, however, to be any significant difference between the two groups.

[P. 161-C]

but Schebesta estimates at only 5 per cent "the proportion of Negro blood passed to the Pygmies" (1938, 111). Costermans (1937), however, who made a detailed study of the Watsa-Gombari population, says that in most villages (in his area anyway) marriages of Lese or Mamvu with Pygmy women are rare. 563 582 [144]

LANGUAGE

Contemporary linguists are divided as to the question of Pygmy language. Some take the view that a search for such a language is bound to be fruitless; others (Putnam) find traces of it only in personal names and a few place names and names of animals and plants. Schebesta (1952), however, believes that he has found the remnants of the original Pygmy tongue among the Efe archers. Efe and KiBira are the two main camp languages of the Mbuti, the former belonging to the Mamvu-Lese-Mvuba language group, and the latter to the semi-Bantu Bira. 197 114

The Aka speak a Mangbetu dialect. Costermans (1937), who agrees with Putnam that the original Pygmy language has disappeared, even in the heart of the forest, states that everywhere the Pygmies use the language of the village population with which they live in symbiosis, though they retain their own accent. The Mamvu-Lese group, he says, are no exception to this rule. 197 114

Most Mbuti are polyglots, though Schebesta claims that the archers among whom he worked spoke only Efe, a fact that he takes to be additional evidence of the Pygmaean origin of this tongue, despite its obvious connection with KiLese. The Epulu Mbuti speak KiBira, KiLese, and KiNgwana. KiBira is used mainly as the camp language but in a dialectal form rendering it almost unintelligible to the Bira villagers. Whatever language the Mbuti are speaking there are certain similarities about the form it assumes, noticeably in the use of a hiatus (the "faucal gasp" noticed by Johnston, 1902, 1904, 532; see also Costermans, 1937) and of a curious singsong intonation. But for the present the question of originality in Mbuti language is still open, and we can state with certainty only that the Ituri Pygmies speak dialectal forms of the same Sudanic and semi-Bantu languages spoken by their village neighbors. 19

[P. 161-D]

1: Turnbull E-4, 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

[P. 163-B]

cons" were not infrequently discussed around the campfires; the decision, however, was generally in favor of maintaining the *status quo*. 178

PHYSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

128
14

Physical anthropology is not treated here, partly because it is a highly specialized field and partly because, again, there is not sufficient material. The work of Schebesta (1938), Jadin (1936), and Gusinde (1948) is notable but still has produced no conclusive results other than to point out the undoubted genetic difference between the Mbuti and their village neighbors. [114]

146
114

There is no published study of nutrition among the Mbuti, and nothing in the existing anthropological studies from which one can draw any conclusions on this subject.

182 *trice*." Schebesta (1952, 42–43) also believes
114 that the forest environment induces fear, suspi-
[15] cion, and guile, and limits the intellectual
[181] horizon of the Mbuti. Putnam is not entirely in
[184] agreement with this view. He regards Sche-
besta's archers as a particularly stagnant group, witnessed by the fact that they speak only one language, whereas nearly all other Mbuti speak several (Schebesta, as mentioned above, regards this factor as an indication of their purity), and also by their inadequate individual hunting technique, which, as Schebesta himself states (1933, 28; 1952, 100–101) contributes a bare third of their food and, he writes, renders them dependent on the villagers for plantation products. These remarks are not quite consistent with his statement that the exuberance of the vegetation assures these bands of gatherers a far more stable and sufficient diet than does the environment outside the forest (Schebesta, 1936b, 79; 1952, 42).

182 Putnam associates the lack of seasonal change
825 with a general ignorance among the Pygmies of
cyclical activities. For instance, the Mbuti, who observe every detail in their forest home, "are unaware that the aquatic larvae which they eat turn into mosquitoes, nor do they know that the caterpillar turns into a butterfly."

[ARCHERS]

TECHNOLOGY

824 237 Archer technology uses only wood, fiber, and vegetable plants for raw material, with exceptional use of skin for quivers and baby slings, and fur for decoration of body and of the hunting bow.

372 Fire making is unknown, though the usage of fire itself is universal. Schebesta (1941) stresses its importance to the Mbuti, and says that embers are always carried about, even on the march. A new fire is lit by taking embers from an old one. Fire is further the only means of lighting, the wood *akata* giving the best light. [373] [416] When walking at night, the Mbuti always carry firebrands and light the path by scattering sparks in all directions. Fire is used, apart from purposes of cooking, giving warmth, and lighting, as the only adequate weapon against the black ants that not infrequently invade Mbuti camps in the middle of the night and force immediate withdrawal. Trilles (1932) and Le Roy (1897) both mention fire making by different techniques among the Pygmies in the then French Congo, but no reliable source has mentioned the practice of fire making among Ituri Pygmies. Many travelers and observers mention its absence.

411 [114] As confirmed by all explorers except Burrows (1898) who spoke of the Aka, the Mbuti use poison on their arrows (Schebesta, 1941). They never, however, put poison on arrows tipped

[P 169-B]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 169-D]

[ARCHERS]

with metal points. Schebesta believes that a 411
number of different poisons are used, apart from
the poison described in detail by Parke (1891).
The poisoned arrows are used against tree- [224]
dwelling animals, particularly monkeys, and
hardly ever against antelopes or larger game.
Schebesta contradicts, in the light of his own [114] •
experience, Stanley's (1890) assertion that
Mbuti hunt buffalo and elephant with poisoned
arrows.

Mbuti use of antidotes is not known to 278
Schebesta (1941, 65).

ECONOMIC LIFE

Hunting 224

Schebesta (1941, 86 ff.) describes the various hunting techniques used throughout the Ituri. The Efe among whom he did his most detailed work are primarily archers. They do not know the net hunt and seldom practice the communal beat (Efe: *begbe*). Schebesta (1941, 86) ranks the ambush as most important. This method of hunting is used by the older men no longer able to track game successfully. They lie in wait and imitate the call of the game, attracting it until it is within range of their iron-tipped arrows.

The daily hunt, however, is the track hunt

[P.169-D]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 171-B]

[ARCHERS]

439
177
This trade relationship has been noticed by many of the earlier travelers, some of whom referred to it as "silent trade" (notably Burrows, 1898), while others found it to be quite open (Lloyd, 1899). But Schebesta (1941) is [114] inconsistent in attributing it to the inadequacy of the environment, which, in the same work, he claims is responsible, through its very abundance, for the lack of advance in Pygmy culture. Nor does he indicate precisely how the trading is carried out. He says that there is, [613] however, a definite hereditary relationship between Efe archer and Lese villager lineages.

SOCIAL LIFE

594

Family Organization

[342] Individual families each have their own beehive- or tunnel-shaped hut, a stick frame hung with phrynium leaves (p. 167). Schebesta (1933, 219–220; 1952, 154) reports once having seen a gigantic windscreen housing several families in an otherwise normal camp. Although each [621] family emphasizes its individuality by separate residence, as a social unit it is far less significant [613] than the band (a patrilineage, according to Schebesta) of which it is a part and outside which it could not exist.

[p. 176-B]

[ARCHERS]

553 Schebesta reports that the child is not named
for some weeks after birth. To name a boy is
the father's prerogative or that of the oldest
male members of his lineage; to name a girl
is the right of the mother or her oldest relatives. There is no uniform custom, except that
naming is primarily the privilege of the parents.
844 It is a Pygmy custom to fasten the umbilical
846 cord to the child's elbow and later to bury it in
some swamp. Schebesta found no evidence of
• [114] the truth of Johnston's statement (1902, 1904,
530) that Pygmy women sever the umbilical
847 cord with their teeth. Abortion is known to the
Pygmies, but plays no part in marital life.

TWINS

845 The birth of twins, among the archers, seems
847 to be considered abnormal and inauspicious.
Schebesta frequently heard that following the birth of twins one had died. He was told by an elder that, when twins are born, the elders are immediately informed, and they advise that if both infants are strong and healthy they be allowed to live, otherwise the weaker of the two should be killed. The mother herself smothers the infant by covering its nose and mouth with her hand. The body is immediately buried in the house, which is promptly abandoned.

[P.178-B]

1: Turnbull E-4,5 (1951-1958) 1965: FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Mombu FO31
Lese

182 (D)

[ARCHERS]

The southern archers affirm that they always used to burn their corpses. Nowadays the burial takes place beside the hut of the deceased, and the corpse, covered with a cloth, is passed out through an opening made in the side of the hut. It is placed in a hole in the ground, covered with bark and earth. The hut is then pulled down over the tomb, and household utensils are added to the pile. Mourning is profound and sincere among men and women, but ritual dances of mourning, such as those practiced by villager women, are unknown.[5]

P
764

P
P765
[535]
[114]

In "Die Bambuti Pygmäen vom Ituri" Schebesta (1948, 543) gives details of a funeral he attended in a southern Lese village, and of an archer funeral, and compares the two. The archer funeral was of an old Mbuti who died after a short attack of smallpox. Schebesta received the news at six o'clock the morning following the death. On reaching the camp he found the corpse laid out in a new cloth, inside the hut. Nearby crouched the widow and eldest daughter. All the womenfolk of the camp were gathered outside the hut, crying and moaning. The eldest son had gone to the village to inform his father's *karé* (p. 179), and within two hours returned with three villagers, wailing. Meanwhile the Pygmies had agreed that the grave should be dug beside the hut. The most promi-

P
M
764
177

P
M
[608]

---

[5] This statement, again, is totally contrary to my experience among both archers and net hunters.

[P. 182 - D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

[ARCHERS]

[P. 183-C]

karé relationship, and the practice of joint Z P
initiation and circumcision. 177 439

Among themselves the archers also practice 608
a form of blood brotherhood, but the two major P
bonds are membership in the same economic 621
local band and membership (with much wider 602
extension) in the same secret society which the [608]
archers call *toré*. Schebesta (1948, 290) points [575]
out that a sense of tribal identity is totally lack- [61]
ing, that "clans" are dispersed and have neither
political nor economic significance, and that
even lineages, which in effect are the local
hunting bands, are usually most properly
viewed as economic entities. He gives neither P
genealogies nor any indication of any complex 621
system of kinship terminology, nor any other 602
evidence that kinship ties might be of extensive 114
importance. There is even little evidence to
support his allegation that the hunting band is P
a lineal entity. It appears throughout that the [591]
major unifying factor is one of common residence.

[ARCHERS]

The *toré* society, however, widens the field of Mbuti social contact because it embraces, according to Schebesta (1948, 492 ff.), villagers and Pygmies throughout the Ituri, being basically the same as other societies going under different names, such as *anyoto*, *nebeli*, *molimo*, and *lusomba* (the latter two among the Bira-Sua). The common denominator of all these societies is the common belief in the bush demon, the divinity of the Mbuti hunters. The *toré* society, as seen by Schebesta, is thus the origin of similar villager societies in the district. It has a particular significance for the Mbuti who claim it as their own. P Z 575 P Z [776]

Although women are normally excluded, the Mbuti, says Schebesta, admit aged women. The villagers admit only one old woman who is charged with the duty of cooking for the men. Further, he says, the society terrifies the villager women (cf. Anne Putnam) which is not the case with the Mbuti. The society always meets outside the village, in the bush or in a remote, dark area of the forest. Schebesta (1948, 498) witnessed no exclusively Mbuti meeting of the *toré* society, only mixed Mbuti and villager, and exclusively villager, meetings. P Z 575 114 [562]

The meeting place contains the hut of *toré*, in which are kept the musical instruments used during the ceremonies and on the march. The number and type of these instruments vary, says Schebesta, the commonest being a long trumpet made of wood, slightly curved, some- P Z 575 346 534

[P. 183-D]

[ARCHERS]

P
Z
575
562

The society plays a part in social life by chastizing rebels, particularly women (Schebesta, 1948). All whom Schebesta (1937) questioned assured him that the primary object of the society was to keep the women in their place, mainly by stealing food from them for the society to feast upon. It is perhaps also worth mentioning that Schebesta (1937, 101) writes: "Nowadays in the main a *toré* meeting place is just a home for hen-pecked husbands. . . . It has no connection in any way with the ceremonial of tribal initiation."

P
Z
[178]

P
Z
575
881
177
114

He modified these views in his later work (Schebesta, 1948, 492 ff.) but used the same evidence. He finds a definite connection between the *toré* society and the *nkumbi* "circumcision initiation." The latter, he says, is founded on the same belief in *toré* but has taken a villager form. Circumcision above all is a villager custom and has nothing to do with Mbuti initiation. Originally, the Mbuti knew only the association of *toré*, which integrated the young men into the adult group of *toré* hunters.

P
Z
575
182
[562]

As far as can be seen from this material, the *toré* society has both social and magico-religious functions. Its primary social function is the control of the womenfolk of any one Mbuti band (who, it will be remembered, come from varied bands and do not have the same communal feeling as the menfolk). Schebesta mentions the fact that, when a meeting of the Mbuti *toré*

P
575

[P. 184-8]

[ARCHERS]

POLITICAL LIFE

Authority

None of the foregoing material is much concerned with leadership, and, indeed, it has been scarcely necessary to mention it. Some of the early sources, such as Casati (1891), Burrows (1898), Geil (1905), and Lang (1919) assert the existence of hereditary chieftainship; others (Johnston, 1902, 1904; Christy, 1924) deny this just as emphatically. Stuhlmann (1894), referring to bands of Mbuti living near the Manyema, states that the leader of each band is the ablest hunter and that he controls the wanderings of his band. Whether or not he has any other jurisdiction is not known. 622 114

Schebesta flatly denies the existence of hereditary chieftainship anywhere among the Mbuti, except among those most acculturated. He also denies the existence of charismatic 622 [177]

---

[1] Antelope cries are imitated in this way.

[P 184-D]

[ARCHERS]

622
627
613 The elder settles numerous disputes, both within and without his hunting band. Such disputes mainly concern marital disagreements, Schebesta says. The elders often settle controversies by delivering speeches during the evening, leading frequently to noisy debates between the elders of different bands or lineages. [171] Outside the lineage context, the elder is not in any way different from the others; there are none of the trappings of villager chieftainship. He delivers his decisions without hesitancy and is obeyed in the same way within his lineage. His power is limited, however, by custom and tradition as well as by context. He may neither ignore nor alter traditional practices.[1]

Relationship Between Bands

628
613 It has already been observed that any formal relationship between bands is regulated by the lineage elders, according to Schebesta.

---

[114] [1] Once again Schebesta's account is confused, and confusing, because of his failure to define clearly the kinship constitution of the hunting band. As the bands are, in effect, usually cognatic, and as descent is of little significance, his assumption that the band is a patrilineage and that authority is based on lineage respect naturally led him into difficulty.

[P. 185-B]

[ARCHERS]

Costermans further agrees with Junker P
(1889–1891, vol. 3, 92) that many of the 622
northern archers have recently themselves 184
taken to a system of chieftainship. They lead 178
their nomadic existence under the jurisdiction 621
of a chief and in every way preserve their freedom under this jurisdiction. If there is any disagreement, however, they leave and place themselves under a neighboring chief. But not nearly enough information is given for any understanding of the structure of this "system."

Schebesta seems to stand between the two P
2
extremes with regard to the archers whom he 439
studied. He stresses the economic dependency 177
of the Mbuti on the villagers, and also, as does 571
Putnam (1948), the personal aspect of the relationship. He does not agree with Costermans [114]
that the archers change their allegiance at the slightest provocation. He regards the ***nkumbi***, P
2
with its creation of ***karé*** relationships between [881]
individual Mbuti and villagers, as a major [608]
factor in maintaining villager authority over the archers and rendering the latter dependent on their Lese neighbors.

[P. 185-D]

[ARCHERS]

The lineage defends itself equally against antisocial tendencies, says Schebesta. Sluggards find that they receive no share when game from the hunt is divided; the selfish woman who does not share any of her gathering products with others is ostracized. Incorrigible thieves, and above all those suspected of sorcery, who are considered the worst types of antisocials, are punished relentlessly, exiled from the camp, and left to die if they are not executed by some means or another. Unfortunately, Schebesta cites neither examples in detail nor enough cases to substantiate fully his conclusions. He seems, however, to be generally in accord with what is known of Mbuti groups elsewhere, except with regard to the position and authority of the elder and the alleged "system" of law and punishment. 613 689 626 [685] [754] [114] •

INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC LIFE

Exact Knowledge 802

There is little information on division of time and space among the archers. Maes (1934) gives the result of his work among five Mamvu-

[P. 186-D]

[ARCHERS]

[P 188-C]

obscene gesture to one of the men, returning to 535
her place as the man follows her and makes a [183]
similar gesture.

Mimetic dances usually concern the hunt, says Schebesta.

Drama, chiefly in the form of mime, is sometimes associated with dance and sometimes separate. Schebesta mentions its importance and the ability of the Mbuti in this art, but gives no details. 536

From the material available it is impossible to gauge even the exact nature of these art forms among the Efe archers, let alone their functions in archer society, apart from their obvious recreational role, which seems to have been the only function assigned to them by Schebesta. 53

RELIGIOUS LIFE

771
114

Early sources offer only contradiction and confusion concerning the magico-religious system of the Mbuti. A few affirm that the Mbuti are ridden with superstition, but most report that they are without superstition and even without religion.

[ARCHERS] 000

without religion. From the descriptions given 776
by the few writers who mention the existence of 346
"spirit houses" and "temples," it may well be 171
that these in fact belonged to villagers. The 114 •
style of construction described by Geil (1905),
for instance, is certainly Bantu. None of these
sources offers any acceptable evidence that the
Mbuti used these spirit houses and temples.

Schebesta, from the outset of his first visit to 771
the Ituri, was convinced that the Mbuti had a
religious system. He finally concluded that it 776
comprised the notion of a dynamic but personal
divinity, that it was essentially the same among
all Ituri Mbuti, but that it differed from the
religious concepts of the neighboring villagers
though it was influenced by them. Schebesta [778]
asserts that the belief in a personal God is based
on the notion of vital force. God possesses the
totality of this force and distributes part of it to
worldly beings. Thus God is regarded not as a
transcendent creator but rather as a person who
lived long ago. He is sometimes confused with
the first ancestor and may be represented by
the moon.

The confusing abundance of names and terms 776
used by the various Mbuti is partly due to the 778
different languages spoken by both Mbuti and 192
villagers, and partly to villager influence, but it 197
in no way denotes any fundamental difference in 177
this basic concept of a personal God
accompanied by the belief in a vital
force.

[P.188-D]

[ARCHERS]

[P 189-A]

000 this basic concept of a personal God accompanied by the belief in a vital force.

• 114 Schebesta (1950) bases his detailed study of Mbuti religion on an eight-month sojourn among the southeast archers on his second visit to the Ituri. He also mentions other information collected during his two visits which is of relevance to the net hunters and the Kango farther west. Here we are concerned only with his archer material.

THE CHTHONIC GOD

776
192
184 Among the Efe archers Schebesta found the name Toré, applied to what he designates as "*Buschgott*," or God of the Undergrowth. Other names frequently heard are Muri-muri, Mbali, Muku, Kalisia, Bi'i, Ba'atsi, Epilipili, Pucho-pucho, Matu, and Lodi. Like Toré, Muri-muri is found among all archers. Those to the north describe both Toré and Muri-muri as a small, Mbuti-like forest dweller, to meet whom is death because he is the destroyer of all. The central archers distinguish more clearly between Toré and Muri-muri. The latter, who is short in stature, is sometimes termed Toré *bo'ichu* (Costermans, 1938, Toré *bo'iko*). The former is,

√

[ARCHERS]

ation with fatality. Schebesta attributes this to 776
a confusion of religion and magic, a confusion of 177
Mbuti notions of God the Father with villager
notions of the demon of the forest (for the villager,
the forest is essentially evil). Costermans [114] •
(1938) claims that Schebesta fails to take account
of the essential difference between Toré
and Muri-muri which he himself noticed among
the central archers (above) but chose to ignore.

Schebesta believes that, though different 776
groups of archers give precedence to one name 821
or another, there is only one God of the Undergrowth, [184]
and he is universally associated with
fire, lightning, storms, death, the rainbow
(which frequently brings death), dreams, as
well as with the good life of the hunter. The [825]
chameleon is the sacred animal of the archers,
in rapport with the sky and the moon, the
storm and lightning.

There is also a belief in *befe*, forest sprites, 776
whose lord and master is Mbali or Kalisia. (The [171]
Lese and Mvuba use the term *lodi* for similar
sprites, says Schebesta.) They are also called
toré mo-ichu. They make their presence known
by two sorts of sound: one lugubrious, portending
death, the other auguring good.

Cult Practices 776

A number of practices are associated with the 782
[P. 189-D]

[ARCHERS]

shout of joy. The wife of the elder then took 776
the carcass and invoked Bali and the ancestors, 224
asking them to give their children game again. 782
The dead chicken was then given to a woman married into another band who, together, with her children, ate it. This woman's son, a nephew of the band concerned, built a small hut (*sa'a*) near the elder's hut, and placed in it the heart and liver of the chicken; the head was stuck on a stake above. The elder made an invocation for game to both Bali and the *befe* (sprites).

Schebesta came across this ceremony twice, 782
once at Rodjo and once at Maseda, identical 184
each time except for minor differences. Certain 177
details, he claims, are borrowed from the villagers, [235]
such as the use of a chicken, which the Mbuti do not raise. He thinks that the sprinkling of blood is also foreign but that nonetheless there evidently was once an indigenous ceremony for opening the forest, involving the offering of the heart and entrails of game.

This practice of invocation and sacrifice to the 782
"*Buschgott*" is held by Schebesta (1950, 209) to 776
be the most significant feature of Mbuti religion, 171
distinguishing it clearly from the religion of the villagers who have no cult to the forest God.

Costermans (1938), however, believes that 776
the word "Toré" cannot be associated with 192
"God," that the *toré* association has no religious 114

[P. 190-D]

[ARCHERS]

[P.191-A]

776 function, any more than has the whole ritual of
192 initiation. *Toré*, according to Costermans, is, if
114 anything, a spirit cult. The *toré* are spirits of the dead, known under different names such as *toré bo ichu*, *toré bo iko*, *toré ba iza*, and are clearly differentiated from the godhead. Sacrifice to Toré may take two forms, writes Costermans, *toré lusi* and *toré luba* (*lusi*, invoke; *luba*, throw, offer), and is practiced more by Lese villagers than by the archers, who practice it only rarely, for the hunt. Costermans, far from denying that the Mbuti possess a notion of God, affirms that they do, as do the villagers, but insists that it is dissociated from the *toré* cult described by Schebesta.

DEATH AND AFTERLIFE

761 The Pygmy notion of soul appears complex
774 and confused to Schebesta (1950, 90; 1952,
171 332). He attributes the confusion to heavy borrowing from the villagers, the Mbuti origi-
[177] nally having little interest in life after death. There is a distinction between body, shade, and soul, respectively, *ela* (or *eda*), *tedi*, and *boru e'i* (or *borupi* in Efe). The Lese villagers make the same distinction. Breath, *ekeu*, is a vital force, extinguished at death. The Mbuti believe that
[775] shades become *befe*, or forest sprites, and the
[776] villagers claim that they become *lodi* or *keti*, phantoms.

[ARCHERS]

Various rites and magical instruments are logically consistent with this notion: the *segbe* pipes that are able to deflect the storm, attract game, or defeat the enemy; the magic horn of the *maigwa* antelope that seeks out thieves; and the various charms and amulets used by hunters either on their bodies or on their weapons. Certain animals are reputed to possess an abundance of *megbe*, notably crows, crabs, the snake (*mageda*), the antelope (*maigwa*), the chameleon, the toad, and the tortoise. 778 761 789 [825]

According to various legends, menstrual blood is also possessed of magical force. [841]

Opposed to *megbe* is *uda*, the force of black magic. As mentioned above, the archer accepts death as inevitable, the recalling by God of *boru e'i*, the life principle Schebesta translates as "soul." But death may be caused by sorcerers through the use of *uda*. *Uda* is associated with menstrual blood, and Schebesta compares this notion with the legends that explain one cause of death as being the curiosity or greed of woman. This second cause of death, through *uda*, is thus attributed to the "original sin" of woman, who from curiosity or greed violated God's laws or lured man to do so. 754 761 [841] [773]

Costermans (1938) and Boelaert (1936a) both criticize Schebesta on this point, saying that the material does not justify his conclu- 114

[P. 192-D]

[ARCHERS]

[P.193-A]

• 114 sion, based as it often is on data provided by unreliable informants but passed as certain fact (Boelaert). According to Costermans, Schebesta's conclusions result from his selection of data to suit his (admitted) preconceived theories. Further, Schebesta relies, as he himself says, on the evidence provided by legends which he accepts without exercising any of the caution necessary for the proper use of such material. Possibly many of the legends and the associated concepts are indeed of Lese origin.

THE GODHEAD

771 776 The Chthonic God of the Undergrowth plainly does not stand by itself, not even when supported by an embryonic "*Totengottheit,*" which Schebesta finds among the archers but believes to be of little significance. From an examination of Mbuti mythology and a comparative study of religious terms, Schebesta concludes that there is a third, and important if vaguely conceptualized, "*Himmelsgottheit.*"

THE NET HUNTERS (AFTER PUTNAM)

[P.194-A]

THE SOCIAL UNIT

621 [114] Patrick Putnam's (1948) description of the net-hunting Pygmy band corresponds in essence to that given by Schebesta; the most noticeable difference is in the matter of size. [614] [594] The composition described is the same, i.e., a number of nuclear families tracing descent through the male line from a common ancestor, for whom they are named.

[361]

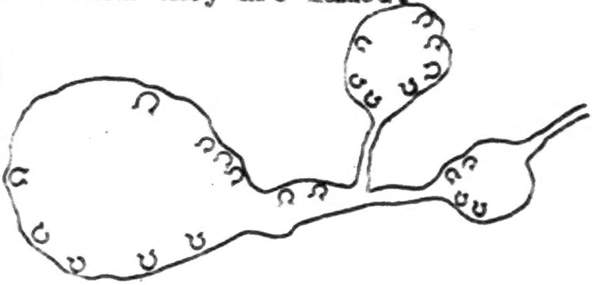


Fig. 16. Plan of net-hunters' camp (after Anne Putnam), Epulu District, Central Ituri.

[614] for whom they are named. The patriclan, however, is generally scattered and is certainly not synonymous with the band. The size of the band is determined at each extreme by the hunting and gathering needs of a cohabitive group.

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.194-C]

about 150, with from 20 to 40 active adult males. 621 361 592 162

Anne Putnam, whose experience was confined more to the net hunters of the Epulu region, mentions 17 huts as constituting a large camp (Fig. 16), some of the huts, however, possibly being in the form of double huts (Fig. 17). Huts are continually being enlarged or re- 361 342 [114]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 195-A]

[NET HUNTERS]

224 **Various**

[114] early travelers describe net hunts in similar terms (Parke, 1891; Lloyd, 1899; Geil, 1905; Christy, 1924). Parke (1891) gives a detailed description of the nets, which corresponds to that given by Putnam, and records their length as from 100 to 200 feet. He gives the height of the net, however, as 5 feet, while the nets used by the Epulu net hunters are barely 4 feet high (Figs. 34–36).

When a suitable place is reached, the women make beaters of twigs and branches, and go off into the forest, while the men set the nets up end-to-end, in a large semicircle. The women carry their babies, but the young children are left with the men.

Putnam indicates that there is a difference in the value of different positions in the circle of nets; the central positions are the most likely to catch game. There is a definite system in set-

[P 203-B]

[NET HUNTERS]

INITIATION: *elima*

881 The first difference between Putnam's mate-
[184] rial and that of Schebesta regarding initiation
is that among the net hunters there is a form of
initiation of girls known as *elima*. Schebesta
[114] believes this to be a village custom (*elimo*),
but no details are available for comparison.
881 Data on the Mbuti *elima* come mainly from
Anne Putnam's notes on several such festivals
that she witnessed among the Epulu net
hunters. She was unable to get full information,
but states that the *elima* (her spelling: *alima*) is
held as girls come to the age of puberty—either
individually or jointly. At such time the girl,
[346] with some of her companions (unmarried girls
and those whose breasts had begun to form),
enters the *elima* house, a special hut built in the
camp in the usual way but larger and with a
partition down the middle. The *elima* hut is in
the care of one of the old women in the camp,
who is also in charge of the instruction of the
menstruating girl.

[301] The *elima* lasts about a month. During this
[302] time the *elima* girls put on the vine circlets over
their heads and under each shoulder (as worn
by boy initiates) and paint their faces and
bodies with white clay about twice a day,
making designs on one another without,
apparently, any particular convention. They go
out of the camp together to collect vine and
wood, also to collect roots and small pieces of
wood that will make good ammunition. At

[P. 216-87]

[NET HUNTERS]

881 114 608 The first *nkumbi* of which I saw something was in 1951 at the village of Effundi Somali. I saw only a part and the final closing ceremony. Although I may well have missed much detail, it is unlikely that I would have missed anything of the nature of a *karé* relationship had one existed. There was certainly no sign of it. [The next *nkumbi*, which took place in 1954 at Camp Putnam, was exceptional in that no village boys of the right age were available, so only Mbuti boys were initiated. Thus, there was no question of *karé* relationship between them and villagers, but also, during the entire course of the *nkumbi*, I heard no mention of it. This, together with Putnam's own silence on the subject, would seem to indicate that this relationship is either not so widespread or not so important as Schebesta assumes.

881 The peculiar circumstances of the 1954 *nkumbi* are given briefly here. Though exceptional, they contain some interesting points for

---

[114] [1] These covered my visits to the Ituri in 1951 and 1954-1955 only.

[P. 217-B]

[NET HUNTERS]

Further, unlike the initiation described by 881
Schebesta, the *molimo* (Schebesta: *lusomba*) 534
trumpet did not appear during the entire
festival, nor was it mentioned. The initiation [14]
here seems to be almost completely dissociated [575]
from the men's religious association, at least as far as the Mbuti are concerned. The only instruments that were used were the *makata* sticks, small clappers used by the women in their dances during this period, and a bull-roarer (which the boys knew about, though in front of the villagers they pretended otherwise).
There was nothing at any time in the ceremony
itself, or in the instruction, to connect the 881
nkumbi with the Mbuti *molimo* society. Toward
the end of the initiation the boys were dressed
in grass skirts (Fig. 47) and paraded through [532]
the village with leaf masks (Fig. 48b) held [292]
between their teeth to prevent them from
talking to non-initiates. After the final cere- 881
[P 218-C]

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 219-B]

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.227-C]

for the particularly long and intense singing at that time. 575 533 765 796

I myself witnessed only one such meeting of the *molimo*,[1] the occasion for which was not clear and which took place down near the village. One villager took part. The trumpet and the performer, covered with a cloth, were carried in from the forest on a crude litter and disappeared behind one of the huts. As the playing and singing proceeded, the villager and one or two Mbuti danced around the camp, tearing leaves off the roofs of huts and placing them against the door of the hut behind which the trumpet was playing. There was much laughter, but everyone spoke in low tones. Finally, the player and trumpet were carried away as they arrived, and everyone went to bed. 575 534 533 796 [114]

The other meetings of the *molimo* that I have witnessed were of the more serious kind, following the general disruption in the district among villagers and Mbuti alike when Patrick Putnam died. At these meetings no drums were used, even though they were sometimes available. But even at such meetings there was generally a period, early in the night, during which the men started singing a *molimo* song that mocked the womenfolk, accompanied by a mildly obscene dance around the fire, with much laugh- 765 533 [534] [535] [831]

[NET HUNTERS]

There is no record of any form of execution, 761
though it has been known for the aged and 888
infirm, too sick to care for themselves, or for 734
those suspected of being possessed of super- 754
natural powers, to disappear or to die of some
strange sickness, under unusual circumstances.
It was Putnam's opinion that such deaths [114]
might have been occasioned deliberately, but
he had no means of verification.

INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC LIFE

Exact Knowledge

COUNTING

Putnam mentions the use of finger signs in 802
counting and the Mbuti habit of counting in
pairs. Despite this simplicity, however, they 802
are able to assess quantity accurately and 525
speedily, as witnessed by their dexterity in
their favorite gambling game in which beans
are thrown onto a mat. The success of the throw
depends on whether or not a combination of
four results. The Pygmy knows at a glance
whether he has to throw in an extra bean or
slip one out in order to make the necessary
adjustment. If there is disagreement, the beans
are checked in pairs of pairs.

Medicine

Putnam frequently tried to copy the prepa- 278
ration of poisons used by the net hunters on 411

[P 231-D]

[NET HUNTERS]

536 artistic flair, even enter into the thought pro-
177 cesses of their subjects. They answer questions
157 in precisely the way they want to answer them,
without necessarily any regard for the truth.
811 They will give a villager the answers that they think he wants, and similarly with the European. Even among themselves Pygmies may appear to be conducting a serious discussion in their own terms, but one or another will, in fact, be talking, consciously or unconsciously, as a villager or a European might talk. Single or even several instances of what individual Mbuti say therefore must be taken only with extreme caution merely as general indications of what they really mean, particularly when they are replying to questions. While we may be able to talk with some certainty about "rationalization among the Mbuti," we do not have nearly enough evidence to talk about "Mbuti rationalization."[1]

538 Putnam, despite his long sojourn among the
114 Mbuti of the Ituri, was always extremely cautious concerning questions of origin and was very alert to the difficulty presented by the Mbuti mastery of imitation. The problem, as he saw it, was concerned not in the least

[NET HUNTERS]

538 114 with origin, but rather with dissociating the insignificant from the significant, regardless of origin. A collection of legends as told by four men of the Epulu net hunters, then, is something of great value but to be used with care. Mrs. Putnam made such a collection, totaling some 200 legends. Its very size, coming from a single hunting band, adds to its value. To a person knowing the band and the men who told the legends, the significant can often be easily distinguished from the insignificant. But source material of this kind needs much fuller documentation than is available for use to be made of it for purposes of sociological analysis (see Turnbull, 1959).

---

538 [626] [1] Similar caution is needed with legends, which, as with the archers, are an important means of expression for the net hunters. The legends are also effective means of social control and illustrate attempts to rationalize the unknown. If we talk about "Mbuti legends," we not only open ourselves to questions as to whether particular legends are of villager or Pygmy origin, but we also imply that the legends necessarily have traditional significance for the Mbuti. The Mbuti like a good story; they will retell it whatever its source. A legend may have had some particular significance for the people to whom it originally belonged, but for the Mbuti its only importance may lie in the scope it offers their histrionic talent.

[P 233-B]

[NET HUNTERS]

Above all, the outstanding singer, however young (so long as he is a hunter, therefore qualified to participate, of course), plays one of the most important roles in the meeting of the *molimo* society. In the *molimo*, respect for skill in song and dance seem, from the material to hand, to surpass respect even for skill in hunting and for old age. 555 53

RELIGIOUS LIFE

The religion of the net hunters is far less well documented than that of the archers, since little is known beyond what Schebesta (1950) writes of the "Sua" regarding their religious terminology, notions of God, and afterlife. On the other hand, the functioning of their men's religious association (*molimo*) is far better documented than that of the *tori* association of the archers, both in Mrs. Putnam's notes and my own (1960b). 114 • [575]

As far as magical practices are concerned, little information is available beyond a few isolated descriptions of various ceremonies mainly concerned with the hunt or the weather. Many practices are certainly of village origin, and some practices that are shared by both groups have different functions. Thus the naturally distorted stick (Fig. 53), known as *amati a oni ganza* (the tortoise saw the circumcision), is for the villagers a magical protection against 789 789 177 824

[TEXT CONTINUED ON PAGE 236-B]

[NET HUNTERS]

[P.236-C]

complete documentation places it in the realm 128
of hypothesis rather than fact.

THE CHTHONIC GOD

Schebesta does not specify whether the par- 114
ticular Mbuti from whom he collected most of
his Sua material are net hunters or archers.
But, except for his remarks on the Kango and
"village Sua" (1952, 49, footnote, 301) to the
extreme west of the Ituri forest, he seems to
have drawn largely on the southeastern Mbuti.
His information (1950, 14–24) does not differ [184]
greatly from that for the archers. The names 776
given to the divinity are Mu(n)gu, Keti,
Kalisia, and So(n)ge. Epulu net hunters also
loosely use the term Mungu, as do the neigh-
boring villagers. According to Schebesta,
Kalisia is the lord of the forest and game, and
patron of the hunters, whom he loves. They [224]
owe everything to him. Above all, he is a benev-
olent God, helping the Mbuti in the hunt,
guiding their weapons and assisting the beat,
preceding the beaters and opening the trail. He [787]
is also the lord of dreams, making his wishes
known to the elder, telling the hunter where to
find game.

[NET HUNTERS]

Kalisia, if displeased with the Mbuti, will 776
close the forest to them, until they make the 782
propitiatory sacrifice *sulia*. The Mbuti are ex- [778]
pected to make offerings to Kalisia from their
food-gathering and hunting expeditions, and
Schebesta (1952, 304) mentions a shrine for this
purpose (*ende kela*). The hunters may less cere-
moniously throw offerings of food into the
forest. Schebesta says that no Mbuti in his right
mind would fail to make these propitiatory
sacrifices: "*à ce que m'a raconté un Nègre Bira*"
(Schebesta, 1952, 304). Unfortunately, Sche- 114
besta does not always identify his source of
information. However, from a number of ad- [124]
missions such as that noted above, we must
assume that his informants were frequently
villagers, not Pygmies, and that he also relied
on the question-and-answer technique among
both villagers and Mbuti (Schebesta, 1933,
171).

Both Schebesta and Putnam agree that the 776
forest God of the net hunters is feared by the [171]
villagers, who regard him in no way as benevo-
lent, in contrast to the Mbuti.

Schebesta also mentions the celestial divinity
Songe (the moon), with its own remote world,
as the sky God of the archers; also Keti, a bush

[P. 236-D]

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 241 - A]

761 754 266 work, the victim dies. If the victim himself awakes and recognizes the *lozi* who is killing him, or if he is bewitched by unwittingly sharing his food with a *lozi*, he can save himself by calling on that person to come to him. If the *lozi* comes he will be saved, otherwise he will die. But there are no instances that such ever happened.

761 754 177 This belief seems associated with death and with people who are near to that particular crisis. There is a recorded instance of two men, a Pygmy and a villager, who were both accused of being *lozi*. Some time later the villager died in the arms of the Pygmy; since then the village family have held that particular Pygmy in great respect. [538] Among the Mbuti of this area, however, the existence of *ulozi* seems to be of little, if any, practical significance, except as subject matter for storytellers.

THE GODHEAD

776 114 [184] The Putnam material does not support any theory of a celestial God such as that described by Schebesta for both the archers and the net hunters. Putnam denies that there is any evi-

[NET HUNTERS]

[P. 241-8]

dence among the net hunters of a belief in a 776 114 •
personal god. He asserts that all their ritual
actions can be explained in terms of direct [771]
cause-and-effect belief, without any reference [788]
to spiritual beings. The Putnam material itself, [811]
however, indicates some notion of spiritual
existence and power, although in nothing like
the highly formalized system that Schebesta
attributes to the archers. Coon, in his notes on
an interview with Putnam (*in* Patrick Putnam, [776]
1948), points out that the water animal is in a [821]
sense a personification of the storm, as is the [172]
belief that the neolithic axheads found throughout the forest are excreta dropped by lightning.

It is largely a question of degree. The material available is not sufficient for us to make any useful observations on the net-hunters' theology or cosmology. All that can be said is that there is a belief in a benevolent power associated with the forest (which may or may not be the *molimo*) and a power symbolized by the rainbow, or as a water animal, and associated with death. Whether these are two aspects of the same divinity, two distinct divinities, or unconnected with any notion of divinity cannot be said.

000 material. These each have their drawbacks.

114 Schebesta gives a more complete picture than Putnam of the Ituri Mbuti but in such generalized terms as to be, in effect, no more than a disjointed anthropological gallimaufry. It is evident from his own statements concerning his field-work technique (Schebesta, 1932, 1936b) that the "facts" he presents are sometimes no more than hearsay, perhaps confirmed by "*flüchtigen Einblicke*" (1948, 475). In addition there is often no certainty as to which particular Mbuti he means. It is equally evident from his admittedly preconceived notions and avowed objective that his theoretical work is more than a little biased.

The Putnam material does not provide such over-all detail as Schebesta's account and is regrettably lacking in information on kinship systems (as is Schebesta's work), legal system, and even on the more observable manifestations of the relationship between the Mbuti and their villager neighbors. It is, however, localized. We know exactly to which Pygmies he refers. It is unbiased by any personal prejudices or preconceived theories. It is based on more than two decades of intimate contact with the Mbuti throughout the forest in the case of Patrick

[P 242-B]

[P. 242-C]

Putnam, and nearly one decade in the case of Anne Putnam. 114

The vital gaps in this combined material, together with its general nature, render any attempt at systematization fruitless. 128 121 As it is presented, however, it stands as a body of facts, more or less reliable, related to two specific types of Mbuti society—archers and net hunters. We can use it initially, then, to test the validity of this classification. Second, the survey suggests a new approach to the relationship between the Mbuti and their villager neighbors. Incidentally it throws a clearer light on Schebesta's notions as to the cultural unity of the Ituri Mbuti and on the irrelevance of his division of the Mbuti into linguistic groups which correspond only to villager groupings, and not directly to any significant structural differences among the Mbuti themselves. Here we concern ourselves with a brief comparison of our two major sources, section by section, with reference mainly to the classification of the Mbuti according to hunting technique.

ORIENTATION

101 There is little call for comment on this section. Despite their linguistic differences, it seems that the Ituri Mbuti form a broad cultural unit physically differentiated from other Pygmy or Pygmoid groups, notably the Twa of the Kivu area and the Tswa farther west. However, before any conclusion can be reached, we need more detailed studies, of the Pygmies of equatorial and western Africa in particular.

621 628 648 The hunting band appears to be the largest political unit, except in opposition to the villagers when, it seems, Pygmy bands may unite regardless of clan or lineage considerations. There is no evidence that, during the period when the Pygmies were used as mercenaries, they ever fought with one another at the behest of the villagers.

197 114 • Despite Schebesta's assertion that *efe* is, in fact, the remnant of the original Mbuti language, linguists disagree on this point. Van Bulck (G. van Bulck, 1948, 1953; V. van Bulck, 1948, 1952) questions it. Professors Tucker and Meeussen (in conversation) indicate that the possibility of determining its correctness with any degree of certainty is remote. This attitude

[P 242-D]

[P.243-A]

[197] [114] was also Putnam's, although he was keenly interested in the problem and spoke all the major villager languages of the area fluently.
[177] All we can say is that the Ituri Mbuti now speak the same languages as the villager tribes with which they are or have been in closest contact.

114 Questions of origin and history can be answered only by speculation and do not concern us at the moment.

[128] [144] As stated, physical anthropology is too specialized a subject to be treated here, though the findings of detailed studies would be of great value not only in helping to answer questions of origin, but also in tracing affinities between different Pygmy and Pygmoid groups, estimating migratory movements, and determining the degree of miscegenation with villager tribes and the relative direction of such miscegenation. This last consideration is of particular importance with reference to the Mbuti-villager relationship.

[P. 244-C]

mutually dependent and equally important role 224
in this, the major activity of the Mbuti. Archery, 476
on the other hand, may be conducted on a 621
familial basis or, as is described by Schebesta, 562
with the cooperation of two or three men. It is 184
not essentially cooperative, and it does not include women and children, so placing the sexes in different relationships with the forest. In so far as hunting is the "superior" economic activity (though economically perhaps less important than gathering), it emphasizes the disparity of status between the sexes.

3. The net hunt, demanding close cooperation 184
and lack of specialization, is associated 554
with a more egalitarian political system than 561
that of the archers. While Schebesta described 224
an embryonic chieftainship, with powerful lineage 621
heads, Putnam vigorously denies the existence [114]
of even a council of elders. Further, according to Putnam, whereas an old man is treated with respect, he is so only if age is accompanied by wisdom. A great hunter is respected regardless of his age. An unmarried boy of 16 who kills a buffalo with a spear is entitled to have a net of his own and to take full part in the meetings of the men's religious association. Such leadership as exists among the net hunters is charismatic, with little emphasis on lineage—a position quite the reverse of that described by Schebesta for the archers.

439 torily. Schebesta (1952, 42–43) involves himself
114 in a blatant self-contradiction by saying at one
[181] point that the Pygmy culture is static and conservative because the forest provides him with
an abundance from which he can satisfy all his
needs. Elsewhere (1933, 28; 1952, 100–101) he
writes that the Pygmy could not survive without the villager plantations. Both Patrick and
Anne Putnam would reinforce the latter statement from their experience of the Epulu Mbuti,
but only in so far as luxuries, such as plantains,
have become necessities. Putnam asserts that
439 the Pygmy could, when he wanted, support
433 himself from the forest alone, and sometimes
does. There can be little doubt about this latter
point, as a hunting group may be 10 days away
[482] from the village. Transportation of adequate
supplies of bananas over so great a distance
would be impossible, particularly among a net-hunting community in which the women are
required for hunting as well as gathering. The
[462] archer woman, for whom gathering is a full-time
[222] occupation, might just as well gather in the villager plantation as in the forest, particularly as,
[184] according to Schebesta (1952, 148), archer
bands are always situated close to villages.
439 More information is badly needed for an accurate assessment of exactly how fundamental
this trade relationship is and how far it is a

[P 245-B]

[P.246-C]

Another very striking difference between the 184
archers and the net hunters concerns the initiation 177
of boys. As this is treated more fully below 881
(p. 252), we only indicate here the fact of the 608
total absence of any *karé* brotherhood between
Pygmy and villager initiates among the net
hunters. Schebesta, on the other hand, places [575]
great importance on this pact for his archers,
probably because of his insistence (1952, 281)
on the fact that the *nkumbi* initiation is an initiation
into the religious association of *toré* for
both Mbuti and villagers. This is denied by [114]
Costermans (1938) for the archers and is contradicted
by my own experience among the net
hunters. In any case, if there is a difference between
the two groups over the significance of
nkumbi initiation (and it may well be only a difference
of interpretation rather than of fact), it
does not seem directly related to any difference
in hunting technique.

Similarly, with marriage, separation, death, 184
funerals, childbirth, and other occasions with 796
ritual connections, such difference as exists in 177
the two accounts seems to be associated more
directly with prevailing differences in villager
custom rather than with any inherent differences
in the Mbuti communities. This, and the
nature and function of the closed associations,
are more properly the subject of discussion of
the Mbuti-villager relationship rather than the
difference between net hunters and archers,
which is our main concern here.

INTELLECTUAL AND ARTISTIC LIFE

184 There seem to be no significant points of
53 divergence between archers and net hunters under
this heading, except in theory and interpretation
of their rationale. In music the archers
make much more use of instruments than do
the net hunters. Schebesta does not give details
of the types of archer song such as given
for the net hunters, which does not mean, of
course, that such a classification into sacred and
secular, for men and for women, does not hold
[121] equally well among the archers. It is simply one
of the many points on which we need more field
data, and it may prove to be an extremely important
point when it comes to trying to unravel
the contradictions, implicit and explicit,
in the material on religious life.

771

RELIGIOUS LIFE

184 Here, as in the previous section, the similarity
of fact is far greater than the dissimilarity,
114 though this may be obscured by the contradictory
nature of various interpretations of the
facts. It is here that Schebesta's work is more
open to criticism, as it is here that his bias is
strongest and here where the material most
easily lends itself to interpretation in the light
[575] of bias. Costermans (1938) raises an extremely
important question when he questions Schebesta's
[192] assertion that the *toré* society is an
[776] integral part of the religious system of the archers
and that Toré is applicable as a
term for God.

[P 248-B]

184 114 Schebesta (1950, 13) insists that there is a cultural unity among the Ituri Mbuti, which he believes is clearly visible in their magico-religious system. He may well be right. Probably he is, but his method of comparing terminological usage among a number of different Mbuti bands as though he were dealing with self-evident facts, while relying frequently on casual information, does little to support his theories. When dealing with cult practices, he is more concerned with the origin of a particular practice than with its sociological significance. He accepts statements and even legends at their face value and builds his elaborate theories on this flimsy foundation.

184 121 [177] In trying to draw any useful comparison between the material on the archers and that for the net hunters, we are constantly confronted with the question of origin. Is this or that custom or ritual of villager origin? If so, how far has it been adapted and what significance has it? The latter question is more important for the social anthropologist than the former and is precisely the question we must ask. We are concerned not with the origin of any particular ritual but rather with its significance and its relationship to other practices in a system of related institutions. Thus when we deal with religious 000

[P. 248-D]

1: Turnbull E-4. 5 (1951-1955) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4 •
Mbuti
Zaire FO1

P of this association is not clear from his various
177 accounts, but he is emphatic that it is closely
881 connected with religious belief and practice. If
575 so, then he would be perfectly justified in stat-
Z ing, as he does (Schebesta, 1952, 278), that
563 nothing has made the Mbuti so dependent on
881 the villager as the *nkumbi*. It would all fall
575 neatly into the picture he gives, or tries to give,
of a clear-cut symbiotic relationship between
the two peoples.

P Schebesta (1952) describes initiation for the
177 net hunters. All that he says would be confirmed
881 by casual observation of the practice of *nkumbi*
Z
563 in the Epulu District, among the net hunters
881 and their Bira neighbors. As may be seen in the
P survey, however, there is one striking differ-
Z ence between the account by Putnam and that
• [114] by Schebesta, and that is the lack in Putnam's
[608] description of any institution such as *karé*
brotherhood. Apart from this, from Putnam's detailed account of the 1935–1936 *nkumbi* at Kokonyange and from my own observations of the *nkumbi* at Effundi Somali's village (near Epulu) in 1951, there would be nothing to contradict Schebesta's fact or theory. The Pygmy boys appear to go through the *nkumbi* on equal terms with the villager boys, except that the ceremony, instruction, and the camp itself are run entirely by the villagers and according to a custom that is generally acknowledged to be of villager (probably Bira) origin.

[P 252-B]

[p.252-c]

In the survey, in giving my own account of 114
the next *nkumbi* (1954) that I witnessed in the 186
Epulu District, I show how, under peculiar cir- 881
cumstances, when no villagers are present in
the initiation camp, the Mbuti men and boys
take the opportunity to mock both the villagers
and their ceremony. This burlesque would not
be enough in itself to indicate that the Mbuti
completely rejected the *nkumbi* or, indeed, that
they are doing any more than many individuals
or groups do who occupy subordinate posi-
tions.[1] I suggest, however, in the survey, that [554]
there is such a rejection, and that the Mbuti (177)
undergo the *nkumbi* in order to acquire status
in villager society; further, that the *nkumbi* for
them is quite dissociated from initiation into
the *molimo* association.

In order to follow this important point further, as it is one of the most significant pieces of information we have on the villager-Mbuti relationship, I must refer to a full account of the 1954 *nkumbi*, compiled from my field notes (Turnbull, 1957). From this we get sufficient indications to justify a rejection of Schebesta's analysis of Mbuti participation in the *nkumbi*.

This analysis, in any case, could stand only by isolating the *nkumbi* or by relating it only to other villager institutions in the villager society. When we try to relate the *nkumbi* to Pygmy institutions, Schebesta's interpretation cannot hold.

P
114
186
881

In the 1954 *nkumbi* there was a very evident divorce between initiative and authority. The villagers took most of the initiative; they decided when the *nkumbi* should be held and made all the necessary arrangements. Villagers carried out the operations and gave all the instruction. But their authority over the Pygmy *ganza* (members of the *nkumbi*) was far from complete. The Pygmies decided which boys should take part, without reference to the villagers; though they made use of Effundi Somali, a village chief, to reinforce their own demand that a certain boy should take part (Turnbull, 1957, 197). During and following the operation, the Mbuti fathers acted contrary to villager custom and in the face of villager disapproval by comforting their children. Both fathers and children ignored the various taboos imposed by the vil-

Z
563
881
P
177
881
186

---

[1] The burlesquing attitude of the Mbuti is significant but could possibly be interpreted merely as a psychological reaction to subordination. It is in the light of other facts that we think differently.

[P 252-D]

In the final section we consider some legends 128
collected by Anne Putnam among these same 186
Mbuti, and observe in them more of the Mbuti 539
attitude to the villagers and how they equate
themselves, as humans, with the forest and with
"good" animals, as opposed to the villagers who
are associated with destructive animals and
saiani.

MBUTI VALUES AS SEEN IN LEGEND

539

In order to understand the Pygmy values [181]
more clearly, and to assess how far the Mbuti [186]
rejection of villager values is effectively valid [199]
and how far it is merely the psychological reaction
of a subordinate people, it is worth considering
a collection of nearly 200 legends noted
down by Anne Putnam during the last years of
her stay in the Ituri. These were all related by 539
four of the more important hunters belonging 114 •
to an Epulu net-hunting band. I myself have
heard many of them told by these same hunters

[P.259-D]

[P. 260-A]

539 114 and by others. Although only a limited though representative selection of the legends is presented, a word should be said about the way the legends are told and the way these particular examples were collected and translated (Turnbull, 1959).

539 114 126 The original manuscripts were prepared under extremely difficult conditions by Mrs. Putnam while living in one of the Mbuti hunting camps. No typewriter was available. Apart from the physical difficulty of making a longhand rendition of the legends, as they were told, was the problem of translation. Mrs. Putnam did the only thing anyone except a proficient linguist could do, she translated the legend as it was told and wrote it down in English. This [91] procedure was further necessitated by the habit of these Mbuti, who speak three languages, of changing in the telling of a single legend from one to another as the mood seizes them.

539 114 Certainly, the ideal would have been to record the original texts, but these we do not have and could hardly expect to have under the circumstances. But we can be sure of the content and the general form of expression. I myself worked on the original manuscripts shortly af-

539
114 ter their completion and had the opportunity of hearing many of the tales retold, sometimes spontaneously but more often with a little prompting given with the aid of the manuscripts. The only legends that were retold in recognizable form were those concerning creation myth, origin, and tradition, and a few of the more popular ones concerning the *satani*, or forest spirits.

539
128 In transcribing from the manuscripts I have not altered the content, but I have attempted to reproduce the legends in a way that will convey something of the manner in which they are told, and I have omitted the often endless repetition. For the present purpose I have divided the legends into three groups: (1) creation myths, legends of origin and tradition; (2) legends dealing with social relations; and (3) legends dealing with relationships to the supernatural.

The bulk of the collection is divided equally between the second and third categories. Only three of the total of 200 legends concern the creation of the world, the stars, and the sky. Fewer than a dozen may be said to deal with the origin and traditional history of the Mbuti. The creation legends are very curtailed versions

[P. 260-8]

CONCLUSIONS

[P.273-A]

121 We set out to make an ethnographic survey
128 of material on the Mbuti of the Ituri Forest, to evaluate that material, and to see what problems it raised and which direction further field work should take. Rather than attempt to record the material from all sources, we used only the material that added to our knowledge of two specific groups of Mbuti—the archers of the southeastern Ituri Forest and the net hunters of the Epulu District. The rest of the material consists largely of isolated descriptive remarks which cannot always be accurately associated with any one particular region, let alone any particular group or band of hunters. Its inclusion would have added nothing to the sociological value of this work.

• 114 The material on the two groups to which we limited ourselves is by no means adequate either. Schebesta's information for the archers is to be regarded with caution because of his admittedly preconceived notions and his faulty methodology and field-work technique. The

114 Putnam material is drawn not from a single coherent account, but from a number of isolated manuscript notes and from the written observations of Anne Putnam, put together by myself in the light of my own partial knowledge at the time of writing, of the particular Pygmies of whom the Putnams write.

128 The survey must be taken as a survey of source material and not as an ethnographic description of two types of Mbuti society. Though I have tried to draw from the material as much description as possible, obvious gaps are revealed, particularly in our knowledge of the social structure of the Mbuti. We have virtually no information, for instance, on the kinship, legal, or political systems of either group. Undoubtedly, the social structure is simple, but it is all the more regrettable that we do not have any detailed description of it. Our ethnographic description, in so far as it is such, gives an account of various institutions but with no hint as to their interrelationship. The account itself is never sufficiently detailed to permit speculation with any accuracy. In one sense it is virgin ground for the field worker, but not completely so. The survey reveals that
128 the Mbuti should be studied with regard to
101 their economic classification as archers and net

[P.273-8]

P hunting bands. We seem to have, throughout,
177 this clear opposition between the forest and the
184 outer world, the Pygmies and the villagers, the
human and the non-human worlds. As far as we
can see, both the archer communities and the
net hunters maintain their separateness, however
close their symbiosis with the villagers
may appear to be. They maintain not only a
physical distance between themselves and their
villager neighbors, but also a spiritual one,
emphasizing their own indigenous system of
values in opposition to that of the villagers. It
remains for further field work to tell us whether
the system of values held by each group is the
P same, common to all Mbuti, or not. Despite the
[575] difference between Schebesta's account of the
[114] archer *toré* association and my own account of
the *molimo*, a re-interpretation of the material
published by Schebesta could easily suggest
that there is a remarkable degree of unity here.
But as presented, the facts could be interpreted
in any number of ways.

P The Mbuti is always conscious of his rela-
829 tionship with the villager and of the subordi-
648 nate position he is forced to accept. It is a major
186 consideration, it seems, that must be taken into
Z account in every aspect of his life when he is in
563 the village (here I refer mainly to the net

[P 274-8]

Acknowledgments

The present study is based on field work conducted during the years 1957 and 1958, under the support of a grant from the Emslie Horniman Anthropological Trust. To the trustees I owe thanks not only for their financial aid, but also for their personal interest and encouragement. 114 122

My academic debt lies above all to the Institute of Social Anthropology at Oxford and to its members under whom I studied. To them all I am sincerely grateful, and I hope that this work will to some extent justify their constantly cheerful, if at times somewhat skeptical, encouragement and optimism. 000

But for the patience and endurance of Professor E. E. Evans-Pritchard, I might never have enjoyed the privilege of being an anthropologist. Dr. John Peristiany was my first teacher, and his personal interest and understanding helped me to find my way during the first erratic years. But to Dr. Rodney Needham I owe more than I can say, for he undertook to supervise this study and has nursed it along over a period of several years and across many thousands of miles of land and water. Despite all too infrequent opportunities for meeting, he persisted in his attempts to make the work more sound and perceptive. I am most conscious of many shortcomings; some due to the ever-restricting factor of time, but others due to the sheer difficulty of dealing with a theoretical and geographical area for which there is so little published material of real use. Largely because of this factor, the study is isolated and does not attempt to draw upon the comparative material that is available. Such comparisons can most fruitfully be made after further intensive field studies of the Mbuti have been made. The inherent problems of the field work have created many serious gaps that remain to be filled on the next field study, and this, together with the necessity for presenting a lengthy ethnographic description, has made the task of analysis infinitely more difficult. Dr. Needham's perceptiveness as well as his own field ex- 128

121 study as a comparative base from which the study of the Mbuti as a
[101] whole may be more speedily and accurately advanced. It is also believed that although the bulk of the study involves a single hunting band, much of the basic structure uncovered applies to other Mbuti bands. The major limitation, however, is that we are here concerned primarily with one band rather than with the Mbuti as a whole, yet this was an inevitable necessity.

Other limitations arise from the lack of monographs on comparable groups of forest nomads, from my consequent reluctance to generalize too far from so narrow a base, and from the difficulty of presenting the principles of organization of a society that does not possess the formal institutions found in larger and more sedentary societies. Nonetheless, such principles plainly must exist, and while our general objective is to outline the form and structure of the Mbuti hunters and gatherers of the Ituri Forest in the northeast Congo (Leopoldville), we also have the more particular objective of searching for the elusive principles that integrate each apparently autonomous Mbuti band, giving it an identity of its own by which it recognizes itself and its integral but diffuse relationship with other bands. For it is in light of these principles that we must try to understand the effective but problematical relationship that pertains between any Mbuti band and the village cultivators who are its neighbors.

121 Another limitation derives from the lack of reference material on
114 the Mbuti, which necessitated the gathering of ethnographic minutiae in the field and their presentation here, adding considerably to the bulk despite vigorous sifting. However, without a firm ethnographic base no analysis would be possible, so the provision of such a base is considered a prime prerequisite.

I have elsewhere (Turnbull, 1956) given reasons for rejecting existing sources for both purposes of general comparison and particular analysis, though this is not to deny their possible value in other fields. My own subsequent account of the Mbuti (Turnbull, 1961) was in no way intended as an academic study, nor is it suited for use as such, though it served a useful purpose in helping the field worker detach himself from the subject of his study, enabling him to examine it more critically.

[197] In my examination of other sources (1956) it was suggested that subsequent field work might discover a more meaningful division of the Ituri Mbuti than the linguistic division made by Schebesta, as

the languages referred to, although spoken by the Mbuti, were evi- 121
dently of non-Mbuti origin. Consequently another objective of the [114]
present study, based on further field work, is to begin to look for [197]
valid structural differences that do exist, following up the conten- [224]
tion (*ibid.*) that one would expect to find such differences between the Mbuti who hunt by net and those who hunt with bow and arrow. The boundaries of the net-hunters and archers incidentally cor- [197]
respond, very roughly, to the linguistic boundaries drawn by Schebesta between the Sua- and Efe-speaking Mbuti: the Aka, to the north, although somewhat divided amongst themselves, offer a third category, some of them using the spear as their prime weapon.

To all these ends it was decided to make a further field trip in which one hunting band would be studied intensively throughout a calendar year, and in which as much comparative material as time and field conditions permitted would be gathered from other hunting bands. It was decided in advance, in the light of previous personal experience, that the sacrifice of a whole year to the study of one small band was essential, even though it would mean that any final conclusions about the general nature of Mbuti society would have to be delayed until a number of other such studies had been made. A band of either archers or net-hunters is a highly mobile, volatile entity, demanding of the field worker the utmost persistence in both physical and intellectual pursuit. It was quite obvious, also from previous experience, that the band not only constantly changes location, but it also constantly changes in composition. The significance of these fluctuations would only be discovered, it was felt, by following them right through their course in one given hunting territory before attempting any comparative studies among other bands. Above all it was essential in one band to find out what the significant social groupings were, and what principles enabled them to maintain any kind of consistency and continuity in the face of perpetual change. How was the band divided, along exactly what lines did the characteristic splits occur, what forces operated to hold the band together and to divide it? The scope of the one-band study was aimed at answering such questions and others that concern band relationships with local villages of cultivators. It was hoped to arrive at an understanding of the true nature of the over-all Mbuti/Villager relationship in this area, following up on the suggestion made earlier (Turnbull, 1956, 363–64) that this relationship was not one of master/servant, still less of slavery, and probably not even of symbiosis.

121 In paying special attention to this relationship it was felt that the otherwise intangible value-system of the Mbuti would be more clearly revealed, leading to an understanding of the ritual relationship that appeared to exist between the Mbuti and the forest, as implied in the accounts of other observers and in my own prior experience, but nowhere made explicit.

114

EXECUTION

101 Field work was undertaken between the summer of 1957 and the
131 late winter of 1958, entering the then Belgian Congo by driving through from the West Coast, collecting as many local accounts of pygmy or pygmoid hunters and gatherers along the way as possible, for future reference. Such accounts were gathered in Dahomey, Nigeria (particularly towards the east), the Cameroons, Gabon, and throughout the Congo, but few hunting bands were encountered until well towards the Ubangi River (see Map 1). It was decided not to spend time trying to make contact, except on the far side of the Ubangi, where contact was relatively easy, and where there were also some Binga pygmies from the west bank of the river.

114 From the Ubangi over to the Ituri it was quite obvious that, as
131 elsewhere, true hunting bands only existed where there was substan-
[144] tial primary forest, and that elsewhere not only was the hunting and
gathering economy defunct, but there had been so much intermarriage that one could not truly speak of a pygmy physical type any more than one could speak of a pygmy culture.

Leaving aside the forested area south of the Congo River, which I did not cover but for which pygmoid groups are reported, I found relatively isolated bands of pygmy and pygmoid hunters and gatherers to exist in the forests of the Gabon and the Cameroons, and in the Congo Republic (Brazzaville) as well as in the forested regions
[101] around the Ubangi River. But by far the heaviest concentration is
in the Ituri Forest, where all the pygmies recognize their unity in the name Mbuti, and where both the physical and the cultural integrity of the hunters and gatherers seems to have been best preserved.

121 There was no question that this was the right area for the major bulk of the field work, but there was some question as to which band to select for the intensive study. I eventually decided on the Epulu

net-hunters for a variety of reasons, their central location (see Map 121
2) being only one.

There were several more immediate reasons, which I give now, as 121
the choice may be a point of some criticism: 123

1) I had already been among this band on two prior occasions,
and had established with them a most friendly relationship that I
knew would guarantee me immediate access to their forest hunting
camps. Although I was known among other bands, there did not
exist the same degree of intimacy and trust, and the Mbuti are by [209]
nature reserved and suspicious when faced with the prospect of having a stranger in their forest camps.

2) I was also well known to the Epulu villagers, and could anticipate the need for understanding and tolerance from this direction.

3) Father Schebesta (1957) had previously attacked my discus- 114
sion of the significance of the music and ceremonial (Turnbull, 1955, 121
1957[1]) by saying that this same band was particularly acculturated and therefore not representative.[1] As the whole point of my argument was the superficiality of the acculturation, and granting that this band had all the appearances of gross acculturation, this seemed like an excellent opportunity for testing a hypothesis that I felt to be valid, and that I also suspected to have far deeper significance in the total Mbuti social structure than I at present recognized.

4) In selecting a net-hunting band I would at least be adding to Schebesta's general ethnographic description, which was mostly concerned with the archers, rather than be duplicating it.

5) Because of its central location I would be able to move rela- 101
tively rapidly to other areas in the forest if the occasion demanded, 114
and when in other areas I would still be able to stay within a few 131
days' reach of the Epulu band, in case I needed to return. Also because of its central location, there seemed to be some possibility of establishing contact not only with other net-hunting bands, but also possibly with archer bands, in the normal course of the year's migrations.

6) The continued existence of Camp Putnam, on the Epulu River, 114
offered me a base where I could keep essential supplies in safety, and 131
where I would not alienate myself from the villagers with whom 122
I would eventually have to work by having to stay at a government rest-house or with other Europeans.

---

[1] For a further clarification of Schebesta's attitude, see my article on the *nkumbi* initiation (Turnbull, 1957), his rejoinder and subsequent recantation (Schebesta, 1958, 1963).

114 rest-house or with other Europeans. Mr. and Mrs. Putnam had long
established their own *bona fides*, and indeed fitted perfectly into the
traditional village structure in this area, where a number of different
114 village tribes converge. Their friendship for me placed me on a particularly
123 favorable footing with both the villagers and the Mbuti, and
I knew that I could count on protection from any interference from other Europeans, administrators included, who might wish to visit me. (Naturally I established perfect accord with the central and local administration, who offered every co-operation, but I was particularly concerned that I should not receive "friendly visits," as it was the policy of both villagers and Mbuti, for different reasons, to keep Europeans out of the forest.)

[122] Having established my headquarters, building a somewhat larger
but otherwise typical mud house on the fringe of the village where
the Mbuti had their semi-permanent village camp (see Plan 1A,
1B), I paid my respects to the divers local village chiefs and head
men, mostly of the Bira, Ndaka, and Ngwana tribes. At this time
[164] the local Mbuti band was in the village, but a sudden epidemic of
stomach disorders, resulting in a number of unexpected deaths,
[165] caused them to leave for a prolonged hunting spell in the forest, taking
me with them.

While the deaths, which included men, women and children, were most untimely and unhappy from a personal point of view, they achieved everything else that I could have wished for as an anthropologist. Prior to precipitating the flight back to the forest, they gave me an opportunity to study in the greatest detail the reaction to the death of an Mbuti in the village, both from the village point of view
and from that of the Mbuti themselves. I at once witnessed what I
123 had seen on my previous visit when observing the *nkumbi* initiation;
648 namely, the almost desperate attempt of the villagers to assert authority
177 over the Mbuti. In this case the attempt was made by controlling
[192] the mourning and burial proceedings, claiming that the
Mbuti had no ritual authority in this respect and were dependent on their *kpara* ("masters"). The villagers attempted to subject the Mbuti to the supernatural sanctions of village lore, and then they attempted to assert more direct political control by calling on their own ritual specialists to determine the cause of the deaths, and to search for the witch responsible. This will be described later (pp. 74 *seq.*); it is mentioned here to show how closely I was thrown into contact, at the outset, with the Mbuti/Villager relationship.

Upon establishing what was, for me, the first hunting camp of the 123
year, there commenced what I might here call the real mourning festivities, 114
as opposed to the festivities imposed upon the Mbuti when 764
in the village. One of the persons to die had been an old and much 765
respected and beloved Mbuti lady, Balekimito. Her death was made
the occasion for a great *molimo* festival, which within the first three
months of my field trip brought me right to the heart of the Mbuti
magico-religious system. Subsequent investigation elsewhere, even [184]
among archer bands, revealed a degree of similarity that makes it
possible to generalize widely from the base of this single band study,
in this realm at least.

I followed the same band throughout its entire series of migrations, 114
living in every camp it established during the course of some 166
fourteen months. During this time the band was sometimes entirely in residence in the Epulu village, in which case I was there with it; on occasion it was entirely in the forest, and sometimes it was divided between the two. When it divided I simply had to distribute my attentions as the occasion seemed to demand. Sometimes I was able to make use of an informant in the other division, and I trained three Mbuti youths for this purpose.

On two occasions I was able to take quick side trips to other parts 114
of the forest, but I left the bulk of my search for comparative material
among other bands until I felt that one complete annual cycle had
been completed. It so happened that the process of fission and fusion [126]
was more systemized than I had anticipated, and my records of consecutive changes in the composition of the hunting band clearly showed the pattern in time for me to be able to spend a few months in different parts of the forest, with both net-hunters and archers, and even allowed me to make a brief excursion to the Kivu district and to Ruanda and Burundi, though the material gathered there was not immediately comparable.

FIELD TECHNIQUE

Before myself assessing the results, and in order to enable others 123
to assess and evaluate the material here presented, it is important that field method should be discussed. The particular technique I employed was born of the particular situation. I do not claim that any other technique was impossible, but I do claim that for the re-

choice of staying to listen to the villagers ceremonially wail on behalf 123
of the dead Mbuti, or of going off with the rest of the burial party, 648
as soon as the grave was filled, to the wedding. I found it more sen- 764
sible as well as more congenial to prefer the wedding to the wailing.

These are only a few of the many instances where a choice had to 123
be made, where no middle road was possible even had it been desirable. The result is then necessarily to some extent one-sided, for no matter how I tried to effect a balance by subsequent investigation, I still feel an urgent need to conduct further field work, taking the village standpoint.

Once started on the road, the process of identification was swift, but never complete enough to render it impossible to observe intelligently and with deliberate detachment. Such temporary blindness to other points of view as occurred took some time to wear off, and this was perhaps the major drawback of the technique, and one that should be borne in mind in the more interpretive parts of this work, for it resulted in a number of unasked and therefore unanswered questions.

Integration demanded a number of things, one of which was that 123
I should at all times be as fully mobile as any Mbuti. This cut down 122
the belongings that I could carry with me; a blanket, a single change 114
of clothes, a typewriter, paper and pencils. With a bundle of this size on my back I was able to travel as fast as was necessary whenever the band moved from one camp to another. It meant that I was economically dependent upon the band, however, so some kind of equilibrium had to be reached. I was not successful as a hunter, being too large and clumsy, and I did not carry a gun nor did I wish to acquire food in this way. When within easy reach of the village, then, I would acquire supplies of village foods, such as plantains, beans, rice and peanuts, at the same time that the Mbuti got their supplies. Instead of barter or theft I used currency, but bought only comparable quantities of exactly the same kind of food as the Mbuti. It was then
cooked, usually by a youth who acted as general assistant, informant, [576]
guide, mentor and censor, but sometimes by myself or by another [589]
bachelor, and shared, as was the custom, among any bachelors who were around at the time. As was also the custom, I was adopted by a woman whose husband was away, but who still had his hunting net and sent it out each day with her stepson. She also sometimes cooked for me, and always built my hut, as she did for the rest of her family.

niques do not affect the basic structural unity. The fact that the 101
Mbuti fall into different linguistic groups is no more than accidental, 197
and is of recent historic origin. The linguistic division is that propounded by Schebesta (1938, pp. 24–26). In effect he uses the terms Aka, Efe and Sua to refer to those pygmies who were in territories invaded and settled by the Ngbetu/Zande, the Lesé, and the Forest Bira respectively; these pygmies apparently adopted the languages of the newcomers to their respective areas and they have maintained some kind of relationship with their Negro neighbors ever since.

The question of language is by no means settled yet, and it may be 197
that either KiLesé or KiBira may in fact prove to be a language of 174
pygmy origin adopted by the Negro invaders. At the moment there is no significant evidence available to this effect, and given a situation where small isolated hunting bands (of an absolute maximum of thirty nuclear families and a possible minimum of three) are brought sharply into contact with larger, more permanent, technologically more advanced peoples with a tribal system, we can only assume the likelihood that the pygmies adopted the languages of the newcomers, losing most of their own.

In this case the linguistic division suggested by Schebesta most 197
certainly only refers to a post-contact situation and does not neces- 114
sarily point to any indigenous difference between these three groups of Ituri hunters and gatherers. The fact that, very approximately, the linguistic boundaries also correspond to the boundaries between pygmy hunters who emphasize the spear, the bow and arrow, and the net may be no more than a mark of acculturation with the three distinct Negro groups; on the other hand it may point to some earlier distinction, but in any case is of much more significance in any contemporary study of social structure.

In dismissing the linguistic differences as any indication of internal 197
differentiation it is worth pointing out that any pygmy from any area 101
in the Ituri can recognize though not comprehend any other pygmy speaking a totally different language because, throughout, the intonation is remarkably similar, absolutely distinctive, and different by far from the intonation used by the Negroes whose language is being spoken. This is one small pointer toward an earlier linguistic unity among all Ituri pygmies, as is the fact that they all seem to recognize themselves by the term Mbuti. One hears this term far more frequently than any other when pygmies are distinguishing themselves from villagers, in all parts of the forest. Even in distinguishing them-

to rule if the ceremony is to be effective, whatever its purpose. By 121
"festival" I mean something rather different. It in no way necessarily 128
implies an annual or regularly recurrent event; its objectives may be precisely the same as those of a ceremony, but the means employed are different. There is no precisely regulated pattern of behavior. On the contrary, there is an important element of spontaneity that gives the occasion a vital immediacy, keeping it in the current context rather than connecting it with the past. I confess that the term "festival" has, for me, other less easily definable connotations that make it more suitable for use in the Mbuti situation, the most important of these being that it implies wider, freer participation, less pomposity and more enjoyment, an abandonment that is almost subversive with respect to the commonly accepted norms of behavior.

Most important, I have to revoke my earlier usage of the term "Es- 121
sumba" or "Lusumba" (Turnbull, 1955, 1957[1], 1957[2]). The con- 128
text in earlier writing, I hope, makes it plain when I am referring to a 114 •
magico-religious festival of the Mbuti as distinct from a ceremony 192
practiced under the same name by the villagers. The misleading terminology employed before my last field trip was due in part to the difficulties of the linguistic situation and the fact that I was then using the lingua franca, KiNgwana, as my major means of communication. The importance and significance of the confusion will appear later in the text, but as I now wish to use a terminology that will clarify the situation as much as the actual linguistic confusion permits, I have to state that wherever in the past I have referred to the magico-religious festival of the net-hunting Mbuti, in which the men play a predominant part, and where I have used either "Essumba" or "Lusumba," it would have been more correct to have used the term *molimo*. Even this term, however, has its counterpart in the Bira *molimo* ceremony, but at least we can now distinguish more easily between both of these and the other local ceremonies known variously as *essumba*, *lusumba* and *ishumba*, which ceremonies are connected primarily with the Ngwana villagers and their earlier slave-trading and ivory-collecting practices.

One last small correction of past usage; whereas before I once or twice (Turnbull, 1955, 1957[1]) used the spelling *Alima* for the festival associated with the puberty of Mbuti girls, I now use the form and spelling *elima*.

ETHNOGRAPHIC BACKGROUND

121 There are two major difficulties facing any discussion of the Mbuti. One is the fact that while they are true hunters and gatherers, they are nonetheless associated in some way, and apparently closely so, with the surrounding forest cultivators. The inseparability of the two peoples makes it especially difficult to know where to begin, as the Mbuti are one thing in one context and a quite different thing in another context.

• 114 The other difficulty lies in the fact that previous sources have not
given us a clear idea of the structure of either group, Mbuti or villag-
ers, and have completely misled us as to the nature of the relationship
114 between the two. I have dealt somewhat with the latter difficulty
121 elsewhere (Turnbull, 1956) and propose to deal with the former
difficulty by giving a brief sketch of the nature of Mbuti society that will adequately provide a basis for a preliminary investigation of the actual nature of the relationship between the Mbuti and the villagers. Only then can we safely attempt to understand the nature of Mbuti social structure, even in their forest society, as divorced as it may seem to be from the village context.

161 It is impossible to give an accurate estimate of the population of the Mbuti of the Ituri Forest, as there has been nothing approaching an efficient census. Owing to the mobility of the individual hunting bands, and the lack of co-operation offered by villagers whenever queries are made about the number of Mbuti they "own," we must regard with suspicion any figures based on a count of bands attached to villages and an average band population. From my own experience, and from discussion with missionaries and administrators who have attempted counts, one way or another, I would hazard a guess at somewhere around 40,000, with no evidence to show that the population is increasing, but certainly none to show that it is decreasing.

619 The total population may be divided, as we have seen, into groups
224 that emphasize one hunting technology or another, the two main
groups being the archers and the net-hunters. The spear-hunters also use bows and arrows for defense as well as for occasional individual hunting. None of these groups can be said to have any political identity, however, any more than can the Mbuti totality, except in opposition to the villagers.

621 The only effective political unit is the band, which we have defined

CHAPTER 3

The Mbuti/Villager Relationship

THE QUESTION OF DEPENDENCE

Although we are primarily concerned with the structure of Mbuti 121
society, there are a number of valid reasons why we should first con- 648
cern ourselves with the relationship between the Mbuti and the villagers.

For one, this has been the area of greatest misunderstanding and this misunderstanding has consequently affected attitudes toward an understanding of the forest hunting and gathering life of the Mbuti even when apart from the villagers. It is widely believed that the Mbuti are subject to village authority, that they are a subordinate people. This belief rests on the assumption that the Mbuti are dependent upon the villagers, and the theory of dependence has been extended to political and ritual fields as well as economic. The exact degree of dependence is something that we have to examine carefully throughout our study, though we can only take it up specifically after we have considered the Mbuti in both the village and the forest worlds.

The notion of dependence has led to the theory that Mbuti cul- 121
ture, such as it is, is in itself derived from the superordinate village 177*
culture, and we shall see that this is far from the truth. Even when we look at the Mbuti in the village world it is not hard to see the superficiality of his alleged acculturation, for the very willingness with which he adopts village institutions and falls in with village ways leads him inevitably into one contradiction after another, which contradictions are possible only because the institutions do not have the same structural significance for the Mbuti as for the villager.

The cause of the misunderstanding is largely that previous ac- 121
counts and investigations have been derived from experience of the 14
Mbuti in the village context, in almost complete ignorance of even

121 [114] the most general nature of the forest context and in absolute ignorance of the structure of the forest world. But this in turn leads to another reason for considering the village world first, for the universality of the misconception and its common cause are in themselves highly significant. The misconception, that is to say the notion of the Mbuti as a subordinate and dependent people is, although a myth in actuality, nonetheless a structural factor of the greatest importance, and it is the relationship of the Mbuti to the village world that leads to some of the most interesting elements in the over-all social framework of Mbuti society as it is today. It is not our intent to say what elements of Mbuti society are caused by their relationship with the villagers, but it is certain that many elements, such as the constant process of fragmentation, fission and fusion, take on special significance in light of that relationship. Even the most central religious [178] institutions, sacred to the forest, appear to be in the process of adaptation, allowing for and encouraging a widening of the Mbuti social horizon, bringing about a wider sense of unity (both religious and political) than apparently existed before.

439 262 Ostensibly the relationship is based upon the economic dependence of the Mbuti on the villagers for food and metal. Both manioc and bananas (sweet as well as plantain) are grown throughout the Ituri region and jointly form the staple. Both foods are eagerly sought and consumed by all Mbuti, who in the forest have nothing akin to the banana or to the large manioc root. The small, sweet forest *itaba* root [222] has to be grubbed for, and, as the Mbuti say, it is much easier to get manioc from the villagers. Other village foods consumed by the Mbuti are groundnuts, corn, rice and beans but, as for the villagers, they are supplementary. Any of these foods may be carried off to the forest [482] [462] camps and consumed there. Indeed in any village on almost any day one is likely to see a pygmy woman or two filling her carrying basket to capacity with such foods and returning to the forest camp. If the hunting camp is nearby, a regular supply line is maintained, and even forest food becomes supplementary in Mbuti diet.

439 When in the village the Mbuti also have access to luxuries such as palm wine, and to certain trade goods; tobacco and second-hand clothes are the most important such items.

[325] Having no knowledge of metalworking,[1] the Mbuti are without a

---

[648] x [177] [1] A few Mbuti prisoners were taught by the Belgian administrator at Mambasa how to hammer arrow tips as part of his campaign to "liberate" the Mbuti from their dependence upon the villagers.

doubt wholly dependent upon the villagers for all metal goods. So 439
also with pottery, there being absolutely no knowledge of pottery [325]
manufacture among the Mbuti. [323]

But it is significant that none of the authorities who cite the lack 439
of these foodstuffs and metallurgical and ceramic skills among the 177*
Mbuti as an example of their economic dependence also cite the absence, 114•
among the Mbuti, of all knowledge of fire-making.[2] By the same 121
reasoning this should make them dependent on the villagers for 372
matches. The point is that mere lack does not constitute a necessary structural dependence, unless the lack is vital. We have to ask ourselves how *necessary* is this apparent economic dependence of the Mbuti upon the villagers.

It will be shown in the section on "The Forest World" that there 439
is no question of any absolute dependence of the Mbuti upon the 433
villagers for food, in that context, except insofar as luxuries ultimately tend to become necessities. It will be seen that in the forest their
technology is sufficient to keep them supplied with all their basic [325]
needs. It will also be seen that metal is not a necessary part of their [323]
technology, any more than is pottery, or knowledge of fire-making. [372]

In the village world, however, the Mbuti are completely dependent 224
upon the villagers. Hunting and gathering in the neighborhood of 433
any village are likely to be equally poor, and it would be difficult if not [177]*
impossible for an Mbuti band to keep itself supplied with forest food- [222]
stuffs from a village headquarters. It would involve a half day's march, at least, to reach a suitable hunting area, and the physical effort alone would be enough to discourage even the most ardent hunter. But even more important is the fact that by living in the village the Mbuti would be out of touch with the forest, and would have no way of knowing the exact whereabouts of the game at any given time. Living in a hunting camp with the forest all around them, the Mbuti know only what is going on in their immediate vicinity. As the game moves

---

[2] Some Mbuti have learned to use matches, when available, and a few know of the fire drill from contact with their village neighbors. There is absolutely no indigenous method of making fire, however, and it is a point of no small importance to their social life that each household maintains its own hearth. Embers from this hearth are carried, usually by the woman, wrapped in fire-resistant leaves, during the hunt or while on the trail. At each new camp site, the family hearths are kindled from embers of the old family hearths, preserving a distinct sense of continuity. Whenever a communal hearth is required, as for the molimo, communal participation is accentuated by the compulsory contribution of embers from each family hearth. Whereas matches are rarely used, becoming quickly damp and useless, even if available, they are never used for kindling family or communal hearths, but only for such relatively mundane purposes as lighting a pipe or cigarette.

		Male Members		*Female Members*	
621 Camp 3a – in	26 huts, there were	13 lin.	5 tot.	9 lin.	6 tot.
614 3b –	22	10	5	10	6
613 3c –	22	12	5	11	5

When the band fragmented into small camps, the picture was not far different:

		Male Members		*Female Members*	
Camp 3d – in	9 huts, there were	5 lin.	5 tot.	5 lin.	4 tot.
3e –	9	5	3	6	3
3f –	6	4	4	4	3
3g –	3	2	1	3	3

Apart from the totemic subdivisions of the Puemi and Bokelé, the lineages all intermarry freely and do not consider themselves related to each other in any way whatsoever other than as affines.

621 The camp plans (Plans 3a–g)[A] indicate the extent to which the
613 lineages maintained their separate identities in the above camps. If
361 we consider the lineages of both the husband and wife, we can see a slight tendency for women to build the family huts so that men of the same lineage will be near each other. The significance of this is [578] dubious, and the rest of camp life does not indicate lineage to be of any particular interest, although in disputes lineage members tend to support each other, but not necessarily.

[184] With other bands of net-hunters and also with archers the situation seems similar, though there is some tendency, perhaps, for the lineage divisions to be more visible in archer camps (see Plans 4a–m).
621 I was not able to stay long enough in these other camps to thoroughly
114 verify the genealogies, however, or to observe what changes took place from camp to camp. The material is all the more interesting, nonetheless, [814] in that in the first instance I was always told that the camp consisted of one "clan" (using the village terminology), yet they did not deny the possibility of marriage within that unit.[4] This is another indication of how difficult are the conditions of work among the Mbuti, when they are constantly using words that have definite and very specific significance when used by the villagers, but which may have a completely general and other meaning among the Mbuti. The

---

[4] "Clan" terminology is used freely by the Mbuti when talking to villagers. It is rarely used in the forest, and was used to me only in response to my genealogical inquiries.

[A] [see pages 340-345 -- Analyst]

The figures for six net-hunter bands and seven archer bands, where I am most certain of the genealogies, are as follows: 621 613

		Total No. of Lineages	Members Male	Members Female
NET-HUNTERS				
In Camp 4a there were	28 huts,	10	5 lin.	9 lin.
4b	18	3	3	3
4c	16	5	5	5
4d	13	7	5	5
4e	11	5	4	3
4f	8	5	4	4
ARCHERS				
In Camp 4g there were	25 huts,	8	6 lin.	6 lin.
4h	11	3	2	3
4i	10	4	3	2
4j	10	6	4	4
4k	9	3	2	3
4l	6	3	2	2
4m	5	3	1	2

Owing to the difficulty of ascertaining the lineage membership of the women, the above figures, for them, are probably minimal. I also found it difficult to be certain of the totemic observances elsewhere than among the Epulu band, where I had ample opportunity for cross-checking, but the proportions elsewhere appeared similar—in any band you would expect to find each lineage sharing its totem with one other lineage. The plans of the above camps (Plans 4a–m)[1] indicate the possibility of greater lineage solidarity among the archers, if we are to judge by the disposition of the huts, but the significance of the lineage did not appear much different. Structurally it seemed of little importance. [114] • [361] [84]

We cannot arrive at any immediate conclusions from these examples of camp composition beyond the Epulu, but drawn as they are from bands selected for study at random, at the extremities of the forest as well as in its center, they at least indicate that the Epulu situation is not unique. Returning to the Epulu band, then, we are left with the fact that even a cursory glance indicates clearly a certain lack of lineage interest as manifest in the physical arrangement of the hunting camps. It certainly indicates that the band as a whole in no way and at no time resembles a patrilineage in its composition. With [128] [361]

---

[1] [see pages 346-351 -- Analyst]

wife was, like Pangia and Betuli, a member of the lineage that nor- 361
mally associated with Cephu. Three days later, however, two more 621
female kinsmen of Toko arrived, also members of the rival Puemi/ 613
chimpanzee lineage, and they too joined Cephu's camp. The two 598
camps had effectively divided two sets of brothers, indicating much
more sharply than the more subtle divisions within the main camp
the extent to which lineage values may be counteracted and even
superseded by other values.

In the following chapters we shall see more of the kind of petty disputes and hostilities that bring about this shifting of alliances, and the gradual fragmentation of a camp into distinct sections. It should suffice for the moment to have this one example of a single camp in a state of flux from the first day of its existence, and to know that this flux, whatever its cause, cut directly across unilineal descent groupings as conceived by the villagers.

Apart from the personal, unpredictable causes for constantly chang- 621
ing alliances, there are other factors that can always be relied on to 574
introduce change into a camp, cutting across unilineal descent lines
and causing further change in its balance. Visits from affines and to
affines are one such factor; such visits sometimes become permanent,
as can be seen in the composition of this particular band. Visits to
neighboring villages may also affect the balance of its internal sec-
tions as, apart from the major co-operative activity of the hunt, there
are other activities calling for co-operation of only a few people, and
such smaller co-operative units almost invariably fall within the sec-
tions that divide the camp. If a section becomes depleted because [476]
some of its members have gone visiting, it may be forced to co-operate
with another section in activities such as gathering, collecting fire-
wood and building materials, repairing nets, and so forth.

Not having seen an archer *begbe* beat-hunt camp, which approxi- 621
mates in size, as in hunting technique, to the normal net-hunting 184
camp, I can supply no material for comparison of the process of frag- 224
mentation. The smaller, and for the archers more normal, camps are [114]
similar, however, and exhibit the same tendencies but with less em-
phasis. This may possibly be related to the fact that the smaller camps
involve food-getting technologies that do not call for large-scale co-
operation, but which demand the co-operation of two or three adults.
Thus such divisions as may appear on the formation of such a camp
tend to be rather more stable, and with the archers they are certainly

it, the children standing guard at the net or at the fringes of the hunt), 224
nonetheless the nuclear family is divided in the hunt, and both men 621
and women are forced to co-operate with their neighbors, who may 626
or may not be kin. The hunt above all is not an individual affair but 594
involves the band as a whole, as is borne out in the ultimate disposition of the spoils.

That the net-hunt is regarded as a matter of importance to the for- 224
est, regarding the forest in a religious sense, is evidenced by the hunt- 778
ing fire, the song and the dance, rather than by any elaborate ritual,
purification, or sexual taboo. The close relationship between the
hunt as an economic activity and the hunt as a religious act is seen in [304]
the widespread custom of rubbing ashes from charred forest woods
into the skin, sometimes slitting the skin first to achieve permanent
tattoo marks. This is stated to secure the protection of the forest.

Whereas I was never able to secure confirmation of Schebesta's de- 224
scription of food offerings being made to the forest, except through 825
villager informants, there is very definitely a strongly felt and stated 152
urge to use every part of the animal, and never to kill more than is [114] •
necessary for the band's needs for the day. This in fact may be one [782]
reason why the Mbuti are so reluctant to kill an excess of game and preserve it for exchange with the villagers. There is no expression of joy in the capturing and killing of an animal, though the excitement still runs strongly. The moment of killing is best described as a moment of intense compassion and reverence. The fun that is sometimes subsequently made of the dead animal, particularly by the youths, appears to be almost a nervous reaction, and there is an element of fear in their behavior. On the other hand, a bird caught alive may deliberately be toyed with, its feathers singed off over the fire while it is still fluttering and squawking until it is finally burned or suffocated to death. This again is usually done by youths who take the same nervous pleasure in the act; very rarely a young hunter may absentmindedly do the same thing. Older hunters and elders generally disapprove, but do not interfere.

The respect seems to be not for animal life but for the game as a 224
gift of the forest, and a gift that may be withheld if abused by waste.
It is further considered that good hunting is essential to the success [881]
of either an *elima* or a *molimo* festival, and during such festivals cer- [765]
tain hunts are devoted expressly to supplying the festival with food.

Among the archers, the system of sharing game and the respect for 224
game are comparable in their political and religious connotations: 221

It is significant that the honey season should be marked
among the Mbuti by a special type of song, musically distinct from 221
the other types, and by a ritual dance involving ritual use of fire. I 222
have seen this dance throughout the forest, and heard the same 535
distinctive honey song, the latter being made all the more distinct by the 535
use of special wooden clappers called *ngbengbe* by the net-hunters of [372]
the Epulu region, *epopo* or *koko* by the archers further east. [534]
[192]

Many different kinds of honey are recognized, and each has its own 222
distinctive taste. All that I tasted were exceptionally sweet except for [114]
the *apuma* honey, which is very liquid and highly fermented by the
time it is collected late in the season. Most honey is found high up in
boles in the upper branches of the tallest trees. This is always col- 221
lected by men and youths who can climb trees, unless the diameter is 481
too great, simply by exerting lateral pressure on the trunk with their
arms while they move their feet up, pulling themselves close to the
trunk with a jerk as they move their arms up. If a tree is too wide to
climb this way, they may loop a vine around it, holding the ends with
their hands, or they may climb a smaller tree nearby and jump across
where the branches meet higher up. Hollow trunks or branches are
used by bees as hives.

Other honey is found a few feet above ground level, again in a hol- 222
low tree trunk, and this is the only kind of honey, except for the rare [192]
mndu, which is found in the ground, that a woman may collect.

The actual collecting procedure is the same. If the entrance to the hive is small, it has to be widened with an ax. Then a leaf tube in which there are smoldering embers is introduced into the hole, and by blowing through the other end, the Mbuti fills the hive with smoke and drives out the bees. Most of the bees do not sting at all, and those that do sting do not seem to cause any great pain. Even before they have all left the hive the collector puts his arm in and pulls out handfuls of honey, eating it on the spot, sharing it with friends who may be helping him. When they have had their fill they throw down what
is left to those waiting below. If by themselves, they fill a special bark [415]
honey container or a basket lined with leaves, and bring the rest back
to camp. There it is shared by all, either being eaten in the comb or 262
warmed in leaf containers over the fire. If it is full of white maggots it is particularly prized, and will almost certainly be warmed to loosen the honey until the maggots wriggle, at which point it is consumed with relish.

If the honey is very dirty, full of rotten bark or leaf mold, it is 262
wrapped in a leaf container and immersed in water. When it is pulled 252

someone's hut.[8] The woman would be roundly criticized, and maybe 685
named. Pepei was either ridiculed or caught by other youths and given 157
a mild thrashing with a thorny branch. But that did not stop Pepei,
and at one time he was becoming such a nuisance that there was
considerable discussion as to how to deal with him.

One morning a leg of meat was found missing from a rack where it 685
had been smoked in readiness for a visit to the village. The owner of 157
the rack had been one of Pepei's most outspoken critics, Makubasi, 578
a son of old Tungana. Pepei, incidentally, was a discriminating thief, [251]
and he was generally tolerated because his thefts frequently operated [627]
as unofficial sanctions against people who had incurred public dis-
approval for some reason or another. However, Makubasi was a highly [554]
respected member of the band, and Pepei had overstepped himself
by committing a theft that could not be construed as a mark of dis-
approval of some mild misdemeanor on someone else's part, but that
was plainly an act of personal vengeance. Instead of thrashing him, [627]
Makubasi simply pulled down his meat rack, tumbling it into the fire
below and burning it along with what was left of the meat. It was
a dramatic gesture, and although his wife was seen to sneak some of
the meat out of the fire before it was consumed, it was an effective
move.

Makubasi's mother collected all the meat she and Tungana had, 685
brought it over and threw it on the ground in front of Pepei's house, 627
saying it was a gift for animals and insects, and for Pepei to eat it if 578
he wanted. This was too much for Pepei, who started crying and [152]
saying how terrible it was to be an orphan. Everyone ignored him
and for the rest of the day not a word was spoken to him. The meat
lay rotting outside his hut, where it remained until consumed by animals and insects.

That evening, again at dark, a peace offering of cooked food was 627
brought to Pepei by Sau, the old "witch" from whom he most fre- 431
quently stole. Thus did Sau, like Masini, restore harmony and *ekimi*
(quiet) to the camp.

---

[8] The acknowledgment of theft as a crime might well be taken in support of Nip- 685
pold's (1954) contention that, together with other hunters and gatherers, the African 157
pygmies, and the Mbuti in particular, have a highly developed sense of private property. 421
It is a debatable point, and largely a semantic problem, and if labored too much only [114]
obscures the essential structural fact that regardless of the extent to which property is
"privately" owned (and if it is, where are any corresponding patterns, let alone laws,
of inheritance?), the obligation to share is an important recognized value, recognized in
practice (cf., constant reciprocal prestations). There is frequent show of reluctance, but

CHAPTER 14

Religion

114 SUPERNATURAL BELIEFS

771 In dealing with religion, Schebesta on occasion clearly states whether he is referring to the Sua, who are primarily net-hunters, or to the Efe, who are archers, so we are able to make some use of his data. However, religious belief among the Epulu net-hunting Mbuti does not coincide in detail with his account of Sua religion. Even among the very archer Mbuti where Schebesta worked I found the widest possible divergence of opinion, to the point of complete contradiction by one band of the stated beliefs of the other. The only systematic unity into which these allegedly Mbuti concepts fitted was that of the Lesé magico-religious system. However, Schebesta plainly saw throughout that though there were significant differences of opinion, there was also a subtle and powerful unity in trying to discover this unity. He was unfortunately hampered by his overwhelming desire to present a picture of a system applicable to all Mbuti.

+177 184 771 Among the net-hunters, as among the archers, the dual use of magico-religious terms by the Mbuti, to refer both to village and to Mbuti practice and belief sometimes leads to an appearance of an Mbuti system somewhat akin to that of the villagers. However, ignoring the actual terminology—which is further confused by the proliferation of tribal languages in the Epulu region, in discussing concepts concerning life and death, the nature of the afterworld and so forth—there is not only difference of opinion from one net-hunting band to the next but even within any one band or any one family.

771 181 822 813 This should be no particular cause for surprise for, being a practical people whose physical existence is determined, in detail, by day-to-day context, they are far more concerned with the present than they are with the past or the future. With regard to the future, be it in this life or the next, they eschew speculation on the grounds that not

776 tence of a belief in such a spiritual being, and its nature as being
778 generally that of "the forest." From the foregoing description of the two levels of existence, human and *keti*, and of the generally accepted principle of spiritual animation, it is plain that there should be a
621 628 source of such spiritual force. The mobility of the Mbuti, the composite nature of the bands and the frequency of interchange between bands all lead to a confused scattering of the various terms that appear in the village religious systems. I have been utterly unable to discern any pattern in which the godhead is divided into entities concerned with different aspects of Mbuti life, each with a distinct name; e.g., a god of the hunt known by one name, a god of the bush known by another, and so forth. Even within any one band it seemed singularly clear that there is only one godhead, though different individuals in that band may well use different names.[2] The forest *is* that godhead (*ndura nde kalisia*, or *ndura nde mungu*), rather than being thought of merely as its abode; hence the sanctity of the forest, and the profanity of anything that is not of the forest. That this is so is seen in the almost universal answer given when faced, either among themselves in the course of discussion or directly, by the question of where *pepo* derives from. The answer is that it derives from the forest itself (*pepo a kidi suba ndura*). Not just the trees or streams, or the sky or the soil, but from the totality, down to the last grain of sand.

778 We have shown earlier how the Mbuti frequently sing and shout to the forest, addressing it as "father" or "mother." They also sometimes address it as "friend," or even "lover." They are perfectly well able to explain this, for they say that "the forest is everything"

---

114 [2] Schebesta (1952, 303) says that the Basua (net-hunters) refer to the divinity as
776 *mungu*, *keti*, *kalisia*, and *songé*. I have found all these terms used, but without any
778 different significance in the forest context, while they each have a special and separate
184 significance among the villagers. The important point is that Schebesta recognizes that the divinity "loves" the Mbuti, who owe everything to him, while the villagers are afraid of him. Here I believe Schebesta to have come across the forest as it is considered by the Mbuti in the evening *molimo*, the source of all good. In discussing the archer concept of the divinity, Schebesta (1952, 305–6) refers to the different visualizations they have of *toré*, frequently ugly, noisy and menacing. I found these same interpretations of *toré* among the archers, but always in reference to the other aspect of the forest, not as the mother provider but as the father lawgiver. Among the net-hunters, when the morning *molimo* comes into camp to wreak havoc, it is greeted with cries of *e téré*, *e téré*, it being openly agreed that this was a form of the archer word *toré* and referred only to this aspect of the *molimo*. But my informants would add, "It is all the same thing, it is all the forest." Schebesta's description of *toré* not only corresponds to a different aspect of the Mbuti *molimo*, but it also corresponds closely to the description given by Vergiat (1936, 53–7) of the "génie de la brousse" among the Ubangi villagers, to the northwest. Here, as by the Lesé/Efe, that divinity is described as a grotesque caricature of an Mbuti, fearful to all villagers but strangely friendly to the Mbuti hunters.

(*ndura nde bokbu*), and if pressed begin to enumerate the totality of 778
their experience. Primarily, however, they refer to the forest as mother or father, according to context. On the hunt the men address it as father, the women as mother. A man receiving a sudden unexpected favor, as he sees it (coming across a cache of highly prized mushrooms), is apt to address the forest as mother. A woman who is having a hard time finding the leaves or saplings she wants will, getting into a tangle of undergrowth, almost certainly start addressing the forest as father and accuse it of being far too severe and strict. The terms are so widely and frequently used that I have no means of saying which is the more prevalent. If anything, I would hazard a guess that "mother" is used more often than "father." The Mbuti themselves say that which term they use and when is a matter for their *roho*.

The extent to which the Mbuti personify the forest is seen when in explanation they say that the forest gives them not only food and shelter, warmth and clothing, but also affection (*ndura pisasu bendu, pisasu isa, pisasu ngombe*; *ndura ekondisu*). The intimacy of the 778
relationship between the individual Mbuti and his forest godhead 535
is most plainly seen in the incident described more fully in *The Forest* 152
People (Chapter 15), where a youth was found dancing all by himself in the moonlight, singing a wordless song as he danced. When questioned as to why he was dancing alone, he answered, "I am not dancing alone, I am dancing with the forest, dancing with the moon."[3]

---

[3] *Kanga me bi akilé: me bi na ndura, me bi na songé.*

Schebesta (1952, 303) refers to *songé* (moon) as being one of the net-hunting names 821
for God, regarded as the creator of all things (1952, 305), particularly of man, which 841
songé creates by means of menstrual blood. He does not, unfortunately, give more in- [114] •
formation or documentation on this interpretation, but there is no doubt that the moon [776]
is, to the Mbuti, an object of interest and (as seen above) affection, and at the same time in common discussion they do connect the moon with menstruation, and menstruation with fertility. I have myself not come across any instance of the moon being worshipped as such, unless this moonlight dance be regarded as worship, except in one song of the *molimo*, the words of which were: [539]

Ema songé, ema, ema; okiru ema; pika'i.
Mother moon, mother, mother, hear us mother; come.

This is remarkably similar to a translation given by Bowra (1962, 70) of a song of the [191]
Gabon pygmies cited by Trilles (1945, 157).

Moon, O mother moon, O mother moon,
mother of living things,
Hear our voice, O mother moon!
O, mother moon, O mother moon,
Keep away the spirits of the dead,
Hear our voice, O mother moon,
O mother moon, O mother moon.

[P.268]

CHAPTER 15

Principles of Organization (1)

121 THE FOREST CONTEXT

While reaffirming our introductory belief that this single-band study is the first essential in the wider study of the Mbuti hunters and gatherers, and that such a study cannot warrant generalizations of wide or final value, some generalization is obviously called for and must now be made to provide a basis for future comparative studies. While we have, in the section on "The Forest World," outlined the nature of Mbuti activity in domestic, economic, political and religious life, insofar as it is lived by the Epulu band of net-hunters, we now have to draw this picture together in an organizational framework. Within this the principles discerned should be specific enough to explain the unity and integrity that plainly persist despite the remarkable degree of flux, and at the same time be general enough to have wider application beyond this specific situation.

121 602 In the absence of central government it is customary to look for principles of organization in the kinship system of a society, and although the society in question does not conform to the expectations of Steward (1955) or Service (1962), and although its departure from their norm of patrilineality[1] cannot be demonstrably shown to be due to "evolution" or even to changes wrought by the influx of village cultivators, there is still much to be gained from a study of Mbuti attitudes to kinship. Embedded in their terminology, simple as it is, are attitudes expressed in behavior in all realms of their life.

602 601 593 [561] We have seen how little emphasis is placed on kinship, except at the level of the nuclear family, where there is a strong affective element between young children and parents. This is most clearly seen in the terminology of interpersonal address and reference, which is

---

[714] [1] Service was more perceptive in shifting the emphasis from lineality to locality, but his generalizations still lack substantiation.

601
602 the crosscutting vertical loyalties of a lineal kinship system. The ter-
621 ritorial band is the only reasonable answer.

We use the term "territorial" rather than bilateral, for the latter
602 term still overemphasizes considerations of vertical descent. This is
621 to negate the whole functional value of the generational system as
561 used by the Mbuti, who use it to establish firm bonds between age
121 mates, and to assign different and essential tasks to different age lev-
els, thus avoiding the remotest chance of centralization of power or
• [114] authority. But we certainly do not use the term as does Steward
(1955, 143), who uses it "to designate certain primitive societies
which consist of many unrelated nuclear or biological families." Stew-
ard implies that relationship (he does not state what degree of rela-
tionship) not only is of no concern, but that it does not exist between
member families of the band. It would be difficult to find a more com-
posite Mbuti band than that of the Epulu, yet a glance at Table 4,
giving the band membership at the close of 1957, shows that every
single individual, representing some twenty-two different lineages, is
"related" by clear consanguineal or affinal bonds to every other. No
individual stands alone, though the relationship may sometimes be
remote.

621 And most certainly while stating that age and territory are more
602 effective principles of organization than kinship, we do not deny that
121 kinship is recognized. We are merely stating that social interaction
among the Mbuti is based on generation and territory. A system, to
582 deserve the term, must be effective in action, and we have seen how
seldom kinship relationships are called into account among the
Mbuti, the major occasion being a proposal of marriage. There the
concern with kinship is not so much in terms of the politico-economic
implications of the marriage, as a clear-cut consideration of lineal distance. The stated prohibition is against marrying on the side of either
the mother or father, but so long as the memory of the elders can
trace no connection, there is no further concern.

58
Sister-exchange marriage preserves the unity of the *apua'i*, and in-
621 deed enhances it when, as can happen in the composite band, the two
602 couples reside side by side. The lack of marriage and divorce ritual
[561] does not indicate any lack of concern for one's age level, for one al-
ways marries within that level and so is never lost to it, but it is another symptom of the general lack of concern with kinship, this time
with affinity rather than lineality. A marriage is effected by living together; divorce is effected by one or other spouse simply going to live

is resident. It is seldom that he refers merely to geographical boundaries, for trespass, as seen, is rare and of little consequence. Yet it is a term he frequently uses, and as an organizational principle it is equal in importance to age. 621

While agreeing with Steward that the environment may to some extent be determinant as well as permissive of certain elements of social organization, I find it impossible to see the validity of his wider deterministic claims for cultural ecology.[5] But while Steward seems to have overreached himself, or rather overreached his material, in trying to draw up general principles of culture change, nonetheless in regarding cultural ecological adaptations as "creative processes" (1955, p. 34), his stress on cultural ecology as a particular factor is highly relevant to the Mbuti and in itself an important contribution. We have seen throughout the importance of the economic abundance offered by the forest, permitting economic independence to each band. While the presence of the village tribes is sufficient indication of the permissibility of cultivation, at the technological level of the Mbuti one might say that the environment determines hunting and gathering. It is certainly relevant to say that the Mbuti, at least, would agree with Steward, for they say it is the only way they can live, that if they cultivate they will die. The truth of their assertion is not relevant here; its importance lies in that it reveals the depth of their felt dependence upon the forest. 114 182 621

Nothing is gained, however, by saying that the Mbuti exploitative

---

[5] Indeed, it would be impossible to do so since Steward uses the Mbuti as an example of an ecologically determined patrilineal band, content to base his analysis on Putnam (1948) as interviewed by Carleton Coon and represented in a brief and obviously general and sketchy article. Steward's only other Mbuti reference is to Schebesta's preliminary seventeen-page field report in *Anthropos* (1931). A minimum of inquiry would have revealed numerous other sources, which while admittedly unsatisfactory would, through their very divergence, at least have demonstrated the inadvisability of relying on the two sources quoted (cf. Turnbull, 1965). Further evidence to support his theory, for the Central African Negritos, was drawn by Steward from the reports of Schmidt (1910) and Trilles (1932). Not one of the many articles in *Zaïre, Congo,* or *Kongo-Overzee,* is cited, nor is Schebesta's major work, *Die Bambuti Pygmäen vom Ituri,* nor the abridged and revised edition of that work which appeared in French in 1952, *Les Pygmées du Congo Belge.* Unsupported assertions such as that "the exploitative patterns produced the features typical of the patrilineal band" (Steward, 1955, p. 128) are bad enough; the apparent ignorance of major texts (for Steward nowhere gives any reasons for not using them) is worse; but still worse is the sheer misrepresentation of the facts he does claim to have at his disposal. Thus he claims that the populations he has selected to illustrate patrilineal bands—the Bushmen, Congo Negritos, Australians, Tasmanians and Fuegians, "and others"—are similar "because the nature of the game and therefore of their subsistence problems is the same in each case" (1955, p. 38). It is difficult to see much similarity between subsistence problems of the Kalahari Desert and the Equatorial Rain Forest, even if they are on the same continent.

114 182 621 patterns produce "features typical of the patrilineal band," for the patterns differ from group to group, and within each group from one time of the year to the next. At one time or another, each group, net-hunters or archers, will be able to present bands that resemble patrilineal units; at other times the same bands will be utterly nonlineal, even though the exploitative pattern may not have changed.

182 Nonetheless, the environment itself does play a vital structural role, and while not necessarily determining the exploitative activity, or the dependence of the Mbuti upon it, is determinant of their value system so long as that dependence is felt. For, feeling that way, [778] regarding the forest as *ema* the provider, and as *eba* the ruler, believing that any deviation from the way of life ordained for them by the forest would be fatal, the Mbuti effect what control they can over their lives by a constant effort to "rejoice the forest."

183 778 [821] Conceiving that the forest is intelligent, the Mbuti conceive that it is like them, and consequently the ideal that they hold for themselves is the ideal they attribute to the forest. While age and territory are effective in organizing the band, dividing it into significant units, binding it together as a whole, and determining the general nature of interpersonal relationships, the territory enlarged into the forest seen as mother and father acts as the ultimate sanction of all behavior. There are certain recognized forms of behavior that lead to a "good" band, and others that lead to a "bad" band. The appropriate positive and negative sanctions are formulated in such a way that all actions are either pleasing to the forest—leading to the ideal of *ekimi*, or quietness—or displeasing to the forest, leading to *akami*, or noise. (*Ekimi* and *akami* are, in practice, essential elements in determining the success or failure of the hunt.)

183 577 778 Thus it is recognized that cooperation is essential for the success of the hunt, so it is stated that laziness and aggressiveness and disputatiousness are all displeasing to the forest, leading to *akami* (as indeed they do). The *akami* is their own reward, for *akami* destroys [157] [824] the hunt and "kills" the Mbuti. On the contrary, to hunt well, to have a full stomach, to sing and dance, is to please the forest and lead to *ekimi*, or "quietness," and *ekimi* in turn brings good hunting, and is associated with singing and dancing and feasting.

779 778 622 621 [114] Here is a very clear example of the closest possible association between religious belief and ethical behavior. The distinction made by Radcliffe-Brown (1952, p. 172) between law, morality and religion, upheld by legal sanctions, sanctions of public opinion, and religious

2: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1965 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

sanctions, does not hold good for Mbuti society, where the three 577
principles are inextricably fused. One might be able to talk of law, 778
even if law implies sanction by force, for the Mbuti believe that the 626
forest has such power and force and will use it. Indeed, in their experi- 121
ence it does, for transgression is met with the force of *akami*, which [114] •
kills. This is thought of as a very direct and practical response on the
part of the forest as the law. On the other hand, public opinion can
hardly be said to exist, for there is no public spokesman, and every
opinion on behavior is expressed in terms of pleasing or displeasing
the forest. Such public action as may be taken—ridicule or ostracism
—is taken in the name of the forest. Exile is literally being sent to the
forest to meet it directly. Religious sanctions are not differentiated
from any others; the threat is the same—noise and displeasure.

Ultimately, then, in our consideration of territory, despite the ob- 621
vious practical values involved and a certain extent of ecological 778
determination of behavior patterns, the territory as a principle of or- 181
ganization must be regarded as a religious principle. Indeed, life itself,
for the Mbuti, can almost be regarded as a ritual designed to please
the forest and secure *ekimi*. There is, as noted, an almost total ab- 779
sence of magic, and the only ritual that can be truly considered as 533
such, and is not otherwise a necessary daily activity, is song. We have [189]
seen that song is designed specifically to rejoice the forest, and to
draw its attention to its children, but beyond this and its reinforce-
ment, through musical technique, of the values of age and coopera-
tion, there is nothing particularly remarkable about it as a social
institution.

It is only when we come to death that there is a marked departure 765
from the normal tenor of life, and a ritual, the *molimo*, that might be 181
regarded as a ritual in the Durkheimean sense of recreating society 121
and reaffirming the social sentiment. While any interpretation of re- 182
ligious ritual of this kind is highly questionable, the attempt has to
be made.

Leaving aside the "legal" aspect of the *molimo* when it appears in the early hours of the morning to wreak havoc in the camp, there are few rituals that could be more explicitly concerned with the "recreation of society" in the most literal sense. Death is the most final and 761
inescapable of all crises, and for it there is no remedy. But it threatens 182
more than the life of the individual; it threatens the continuity of the band, and so threatens the ritual of life by which the forest is pleased. Death itself is recognized as deriving from the forest, so is accepted

Indeed, certain elements of the forest system can only be explained 177*
in relationship to the village context, such as the excessively fluid 121
composition of the band and the almost paranoid attitude to a single 182
villager passing through a hunting camp, sufficient to suspend the vital and central, all-important *molimo* festival, even at its height, or transform it into a village-style parody. This quite singular feature has found no explanation in terms of either the village alone or the forest alone. Let us then briefly review the forest system, and look at it again in the village context. The following elements have 621
emerged as having the greatest structural significance:

1. THE BAND is the basic unit, its membership being influenced by economic rather than kinship considerations. Constant association and cooperative compatibility outweigh kinship even within the band in regulating the process of fission and fusion. This latter process [221]
is related to the annual honey season; but it is not determined by it. The over-all size of the band, or of its subsections, is, however, determined [162]
by ecological factors resulting in a maximum of about thirty [594]
nuclear families for a band, and a minimum of three families for a subsection. Although the band is nonlineal, the network of consanguineal and affinal interpersonal relationships is recognized to link all members, so that the terminology, while referring to age levels regardless of actual or fictive kinship, still has the same affective qualities of kinship terminology, the term referring to age mates (*apua'i*) being the most widely used, and the most effective.

With the best will in the world, it is not possible to apply the kind 602
of analysis suggested by Lévi-Strauss (1958) for following his argument 121
(that the biological family makes a poor starting point); further 561
we must also abandon the affinal family and the system of affective 571
relationships that Lévi-Strauss saw to pertain there. For among the 593
Mbuti affective relationships are determined more by age than by [014]
kinship, consanguineal or affinal. We simply cannot follow a set formula that takes no account of the age factor. Thus *f/s* is positive when *s* is a child.[1] It is negative when *s* is a youth, becomes less strained when *s* becomes a hunter, but only approaches positive again when *f* becomes an elder. In other words the relationship is positive as long as *f/s* are not in adjacent age levels. The greatest friction arises when *s* approaches adulthood and is about to become a hunter, a signal for the retirement of the father into elderhood. It

---

[1] *f* = father; *s* = son; *m* = mother; *d* = daughter; *b* = brother; *z* = sister.

602
Despite all of which, and the lack of structurally significant rules 121
of inheritance of property or status (names sometimes being handed 561
on down to alternate generations, but not necessarily so), and with 593
no apparent concomitant inheritance of status, certainly not of prop- 424
erty, there is a recognition of the patrilineage, and a tendency to- 613
ward patrilocality.[3] 554

2. AGE is the prime factor in dividing the band into significant 561
units, the significance being seen in terms of domestic, economic, 621
legal and governmental responsibilities. Each age level has a distinct role that contributes to the total social order, and in all these aspects of life it is consistently of greater import than kinship. The consistency still remains as firm in religious life, and following the ultimate crisis of death. The dead belong, as it were, to yet another age 561
level, and one that is almost dissociated from the four levels of the 761
living. Thus after death there is no familial concern for the dead, as [769]
seen in the complete lack of concern with ancestral ghosts. Far from disclaiming the dead relatives through fear[4], the Mbuti continue to regard them with affection insofar as they regard them at all. Their preference for forgetting the dead reflects an attitude toward death, not to the individual dead.

Each age level has its own way of earning the respect of the band 561
as a whole, by fulfilling what is referred to as its "duty." Thus the duty 88
of children is to grow up in good health. The duty of youths is to sing, flirt and play—and help the parental level. The duty of the hunters is to hunt and, oddly enough, to create *akami*, or noise, and the duty of

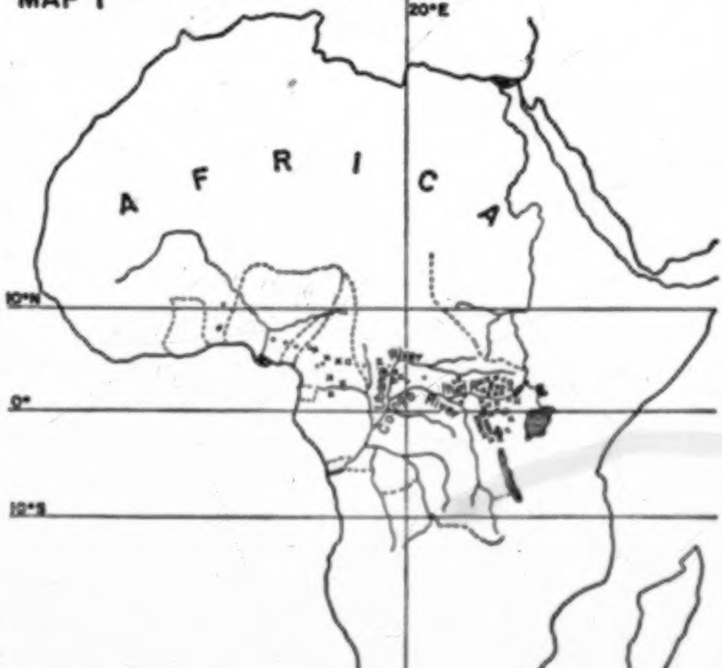
[3] We have to assert that there is, for the moment, no evidence that the territorial [621]
band is a product of special considerations, as suggested by Steward and Service (in [648]
whose terminology the band is "composite"). In particular we must reject, for the Mbuti, [114]
the assertion of Service (1962, p. 40) so convenient to his argument for virilocality, that all such societies were, before they were "so thoroughly subjugated," characterized by fighting between "unrelated groups," resulting in "fears, dangers and enmities." Also it is necessary to deny his assertion that such societies are "enclaved among more powerful neighbours—and cannot but lose or be heavily punished for any breach of the peace." If anything, in the Ituri, it is the villages that are enclaved. Further gross misrepresentation, perhaps owing to paucity of reliable material, is offered by Service (1962, p. 108) in the bald statement: "The composite band, on the other hand, is obviously a product of the near-destruction of aboriginal bands after contact with civilization. In all cases there is conclusive evidence of rapid depopulation by disease which, when combined with ending of hostilities among the aborigines themselves under the dominance of the common enemy, resulted in the merging of previously unrelated peoples." The evidence now available, while not denying the possible validity of such historical reconstruction, in no way supports it. Indeed, there is evidence to the contrary.

[4] For an example of precisely the opposite situation, see Beattie (1960, p. 76), where concern for kinship obligations during life is continued after death, resulting in a desire to disavow relationships.

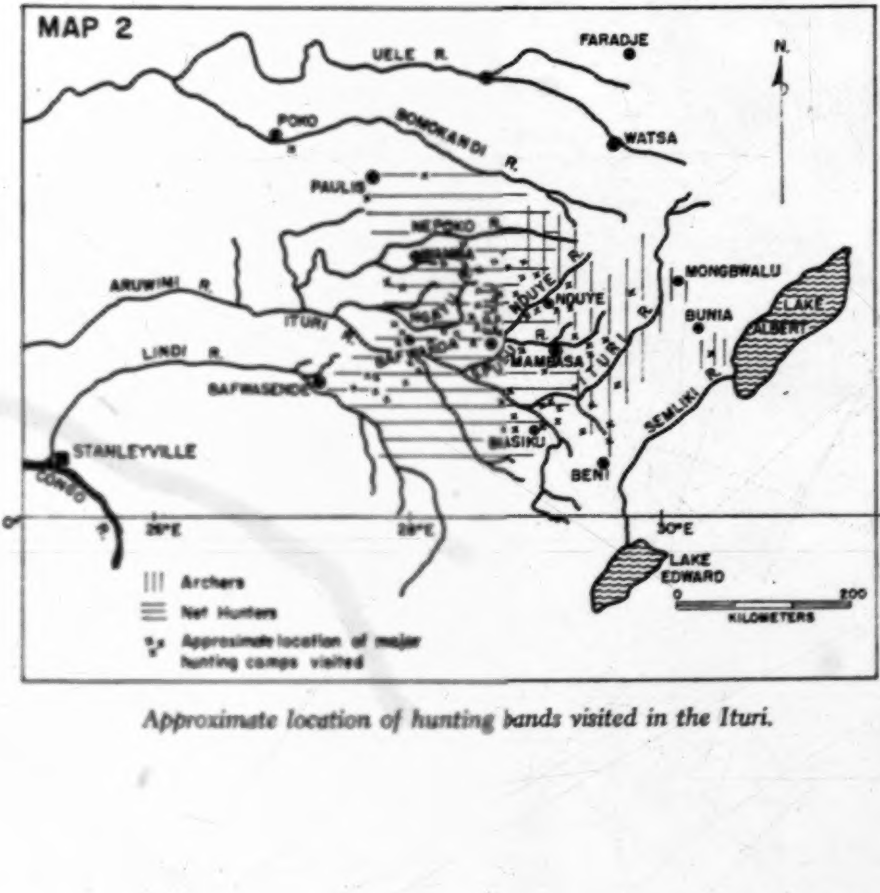
102
114
131
133

MAP I

Extent of personal knowledge of pygmy groups according to accounts heard *in situ* and personal contact made during 1957/8 field trip (not covering central and southern Congo)


20°E
A F R I C A
10°N
0°
10°S
River
Congo River

102
114
131
133


MAP 2
UELE R.
FARADJE
N.
POKO
BOMOKANDI R.
WATSA
PAULIS
NEPOKO R.
NDUYE R.
NDUYE
MONGBWALU
ARUWIMI R.
ITURI R.
BUNIA
LAKE ALBERT
LINDI R.
MAMBASA
ITURI R.
BAFWASENDE
SEMLIKI R.
BIASIKU
STANLEYVILLE
BENI
CONGO
0°
26°E
28°E
30°E
0°
LAKE EDWARD
0
200
KILOMETERS
Archers
Net Hunters
Approximate location of major hunting camps visited

Approximate location of hunting bands visited in the Ituri.

[P.391]

114

Colin M. Turnbull was born in London and now lives in New York City, where he is Associate Curator of African Ethnology at The American Museum of Natural History. He was educated at the Westminster School and at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he studied philosophy and politics. After serving in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve during the war, he held a research grant for two years in the Department of Indian Religion and Philosophy at Banaras Hindu University, in India, and then returned to Oxford, where he studied anthropology, specializing in the African field.

He has made three extended field trips to Africa, from which he drew the material for this volume, as well as his two previous books, *The Forest People*, a more informal study of the Congo Pygmies, and *The Lonely African*, a study of tribalism and cultural change in modern Africa. He is a Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute, and a Corresponding Member of Le Musée Royal d'Afrique Centrale.

3: Turnbull

FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

114
123

[For numerous scattered references throughout this source on the author's participation in various Mbuti life cycle events, see whole text, category 116, passim.]

Foreword

The Forest People is about the life of a Pygmy people living in the Ituri Forest in the Congo. Its author is an anthropologist. The book is exceptional. 114

These three statements do not—alas—form a syllogism, but they do have some connection with each other, and together they help to explain why reading *The Forest People* is an unusual and satisfying experience. Most of the literature on the life of "primitive" people is in the form of fairly technical reports in which individuals are swallowed up by abstractions and feeling is replaced by analysis.

1A There is nothing wrong with this for the purpose it serves. But you get little idea from these monographs of what it is like to lead the kind of life they describe, or what the people observed are really like as human beings.

One might conclude from this that anthropologists with their special orientation were not the best suited to give us a non-technical, humanized, and personalized view of primitive people. It is my belief that the contrary is the case. Their special techniques, their sympathy, and their understanding make them in fact ideal interpreters. Indeed, it is the professional interest of the anthropologist in primitive societies, in the first place, that drives them to devote the years of patient study and observation that are required for the insight they seek. And, in the second, their rigorous analytical methods guarantee some measure of the objectivity without which the less wary observer is often led into sentiment and bias.

One of the reasons why *The Forest People* is an exceptional book is because its author, Colin M. Turnbull, is an anthropologist who knows the Pygmies intimately from years of living among them. In this book he has fortunately chosen the unusual course of writing about them as individuals, as his friends, each with a personality of his own. From his knowledge of their culture and its adaptation to the conditions of an African rain forest, he is able to provide another dimension to their lives that the casual visitor might easily miss altogether. As a result the reader can enter into some understanding of the meaning of their lives and enjoy the exhilaration of participating in a culture other than his own.

Harry L. Shapiro
Chairman and Curator
of Physical Anthropology

January 1962
American Museum of Natural History

ing the power, small as they were, to kill elephants. The Pygmies 000 today still kill elephants single-handed, armed only with a short- 224 handled spear. And they blend so well with the forest foliage that you can pass right by without seeing them. As for their having tails, 291 it is easy enough to see how this story came into being, if the Pyg- (175) mies seen by the Portuguese dressed as they do today, as is more than likely. The loincloth they wear is made of the bark of a tree, softened and hammered out until it is a long slender cloth, tucked between the legs and over a belt, front and back. The women particularly like to have a long piece of cloth so that it hangs down behind, almost to the ground. They say it looks well when dancing.

Some of the accounts of nineteenth-century travelers in the Congo 175 are no less fanciful, and it was George Schweinfurth who first made known to the world, in his book *The Heart of Africa*, that Pygmies not only existed but were human. He was following in the path of the Italian explorer Miani, who a few years earlier had reached the Ituri but had died before he could return. One of the most curious of little-known stories about the Pygmies is that Miani actually sent two of them back to Italy, to the Geographic Association, which had sponsored his trip. The president of the association, Count Miniscalchi of Verona, took the two boys and educated them. Contemporary newspaper reports describe them as strolling the boulevards, arm in arm with their Italian friends, chatting in Italian. One of them even learned to play the piano. From the present Count Miniscalchi I learned that both Pygmies eventually returned to Africa, where one died and the other became a saddler in the Ethiopian army. He last heard from the latter, who must then have been an old man, just before the outbreak of World War II.

Stanley describes his meetings with the Pygmies in the Ituri, but 175 without telling us much about them, and indeed little was known 114 beyond the actual fact of their existence until a White Father, the

175 Reverend Paul Schebesta, set out from Vienna in the nineteen-twen-
114 ties to study them.

114 Schebesta's first trip was an over-all survey of the forest area, in
144 which he established the fact that this was a stronghold of the pure Pygmy, as opposed to the "Pygmoid" in other parts of the equatorial belt, where there has been intermarriage with Negro tribes. In subsequent trips Schebesta gathered material which showed that these Ituri Pygmies—whose term for themselves, BaMbuti, he adopts—are in fact racially distinct from the Negro peoples, Bantu and Sudanic, who live around them. This fact has been confirmed by later
174 genetic studies, up to the present. Though we cannot be sure, it seems reasonable to assume that the BaMbuti were the original inhabitants of the great tropical rain forest stretching from the west coast right across to the open savanna country of the east, on the far side of the chain of lakes that divides the Congo from East Africa.

114 But when I read Schebesta's account of the Pygmies it just did not
533 ring true when compared with my own experiences on my first trip to the Ituri. For instance, in one of his first books he says that the Pygmies are not great musicians, but that they sing only the simplest melodies and beat on drums and dance wild erotic dances. Even much later, after he had come to know the Pygmies better and had spent several years in the region, when he wrote his major work, running to several volumes, he devoted only a few pages to music, attributing little importance to it and dismissing it as simple and undeveloped. This could not have been further from the truth.

114 In several other ways I felt that all was not well with Schebesta's
177 account, particularly with his description of the relationship between Pygmies and Negroes. He gave the impression that the Pygmies were dependent on the Negroes both for food and for metal products and that there was an unbreakable hereditary relationship by which a Pygmy and all his progeny were handed down in a Negro family, from father to son, and bound to it in a form of serfdom, not only

hunting but also working on plantations, cutting wood and drawing 114
water. None of this was true of the Pygmies that I knew. But I did 177
agree with Schebesta about the *molimo* (a religious festival). Although he had not seen it himself, from what he heard about it and about similar practices among other groups of Pygmies, he felt sure that it was essentially different from the practices of neighboring Negroes, however similar they might appear to be on the surface. This certainly tallied with my own experience.

The general picture that emerged from his studies was that there 114
were, living in the Ituri Forest, some 35,000 BaMbuti Pygmies, 101
divided into three linguistic groups, speaking dialects of three major 177 [161]
Negro languages. The Pygmies seemed to have lost their own language, [174]
due to the process of acculturation though traces remained, [177]
especially in tonal pattern. Only in the easternmost group did Schebesta feel that the language had survived to any recognizable extent. [184]
These were the Efe Pygmies who lived among the BaLese, an eastern Sudanic tribe with a not very savory reputation for cannibalism, witchcraft and sorcery.

But in spite of this linguistic difference, and the fact that the Efe 114
also differed in that they did not hunt with nets but with bow and 105
arrow and spear, Schebesta believed that all the BaMbuti were a [illegible]
single cultural unit. They tended to live in small groups of from three [411]
families upward, moving around the forest from camp to camp, though always attached to some Negro village with which they traded meat for plantation products. There was no form of chieftainship, and no mechanism for maintaining law and order, and it was difficult—from Schebesta's account—to see what prevented these
isolated groups from falling into complete chaos. The most powerful 114
unifying factor, it appeared, was the domination of the Pygmies by 105
the Negroes. Schebesta cited the *nkumbi* initiation as an example of 177
the way Negroes forced the BaMbuti to accept their authority and that of their tribal lore. Remembering what I had seen, living in an

114 105 177 initiation camp, I could not accept this point of view at all. Yet it was one shared by others, some of whom had lived in the area for years.

114 177 The explanation was simple enough, and it was not that either one of us was right and the other wrong. Whereas Father Schebesta had always had to work through Negroes, and largely in Negro villages, I had been fortunate in being able to make direct contact with the Pygmies, and in fact had spent most of my time with them away from Negro influence. Other Europeans had also only seen the Pygmies either in Negro villages or on Negro plantations. But I had seen enough of them both in the forest and in the village to know that they were completely different people in the two sets of circumstances. All that we knew of them to date had been based on observations made either in the villages or in the presence of Negroes.

184 Whereas my first visit to the Ituri Forest, in 1951, had been made mainly out of curiosity, I had seen enough to make me want to return to this area for more intensive study. An ideal location was provided by a strange establishment set up on the banks of the Epulu River back in the nineteen-twenties by an American anthropologist, Patrick Putnam.* He had gone there to do his field work but had liked the place and the people so much that he decided to stay. He built himself a huge mud mansion, and gradually a village grew up around him and became known as "Camp Putnam." The Pygmies treated it just as they treated any other Bantu village (the main Negro tribes nearby were the BaBira and BaNdaka, with a few Moslem BaNgwana), and used to visit it to trade their meat for plantation products. This was where I first met them.

---

* Patrick Putnam first went to the Belgian Congo in 1927 to do field work for Harvard University. Apart from one or two brief return visits to the United States he remained there until his death at the end of 1953. At Camp Putnam he established a dispensary and a leper colony, turning his home into a guest house to help pay the expenses of his hospital work.

But on my second visit, in 1954, I was provided with a real opportunity for studying the relationship between the Pygmies and their village neighbors. The event was the decision of the local Negro chief to hold a tribal nkumbi initiation festival. This is a festival in which all boys between the ages of about nine and twelve are circumcised, then set apart and kept in an initiation camp where they are taught the secrets of tribal lore, to emerge after two or three months with the privileges and responsibilities of adult status. 114 177 881

The nkumbi is a village custom, but in areas where the practice prevails the Pygmies always send their children to be initiated along with the Negro boys. This has been cited as an example of their dependence on the Negroes and of their lack of an indigenous culture. The Negroes take all the leading roles in the festival, and as no Pygmy belongs to the tribe, none can become a ritual specialist, so the Pygmy boys always have to depend on the Negroes for admission to an initiation, and for the subsequent instruction. An uninitiated male, Pygmy or Negro, young or old, is considered as a child—half a man at best. 177 881

Only relatives of the boys undergoing initiation are allowed to live in the camp, though any adult initiated male can visit the camp during the daytime.

But it so happened that on this occasion there were no Negro boys of the right age for initiation, so the only men who could live in the camp and stay there all night were Pygmies. To go against the custom of allowing just relatives to live in the camp would have brought death and disaster. Nevertheless the Negroes went ahead with the festival because it has to be held to avoid offending the tribal ancestors. The Negro men would have liked to stay in the camp all night, as normally instruction goes on even then, the boys being allowed to sleep only for short periods. But custom was too strong, and they had to rely on the Pygmy fathers to maintain order in the camp after dark and not allow the children to have too much sleep.

484 other wives, and they left without saying a word to him. As Kamai-
595 kan squatted over the fire, fanning it until it glowed red, I saw that she was pregnant, and I gathered from the look she cast after her two co-wives that her condition was the cause of some jealousy in the household.

115 Kenge delayed leaving, finding one excuse after another, until the
482 sun was up. He then admitted that he had thought it silly to leave
484 so early, when the forest was still wet and cold. He disappeared for
[513] an hour after that, and when he returned he was carrying a sleeping
[171] mat he had scrounged from a Negro (Pygmies generally sleep on leaves or sticks), a large bunch of plantains, and a cake of scented soap. He decided he could not carry my bundle as well as these things, so he told me I would have to carry my own. Anyway, he
[224] said, he wanted to leave his hands as free as possible in case he saw a bird or monkey he could shoot for dinner. He pulled the string of his bow and let it go with a loud twang, shooting an arm out in the direction the arrow would have gone, pointing to a tree top where a black-and-white Colobus monkey, idly scratching its stomach,
[186] gazed down at the scene below. I heard later that Kenge considered himself above acting as a porter; he apparently thought of that as a job fit only for people of the village, not people of the forest. Any self-respecting Pygmy carries his own load and no one else's.

484 When the sun was above the trees and the birds were singing and
114 the village half empty, we crossed the road and walked through the
[273] Negro settlement, stopping for a quick last drink of palm wine, for no such luxuries are to be had in the forest. There were six of us in all: five Pygmy youths and myself.

[481] The palm wine finished, they set off through the Negro plantations at such a pace that I almost had to run to keep up. At the edge of the plantations the forest was thick and matted, and the path entering it was narrow. The ground was still rough where saplings had been hacked off just above ground level, and on either side was

a tangle of fallen trees and ever-spreading vines and creepers. Here P 484 114 • [824] [342] [137]
and there where the *fito*—the sapling used by villagers for building
their houses—had once grown, the tangle was even worse. Once
the forest is cut it grows up again, not as the mighty primeval forest
it was, but as a jungle of secondary vegetation that in places is almost
impenetrable. We went in single file, for the most part following a P 484 481 114 [489]
path; when we left it the youths in front flashed their hatchets above
their heads, slashing away overhanging branches and vines without
even slowing up, to make it easier for us to follow. But where they
cut they left sharp jagged ends sticking out at just about eye-level
for me. When newly cut these dangerous points are plainly visible
and easy to avoid, but when they become old and dirty they are a
real menace.

After about half an hour we reached the place where the more C 484 824 776 P 484 [241]
ambitious Pygmies had tried to make a plantation; this was the
farthest point from the new village of Epulu that the Negroes had
reached when searching for the wood to build their houses. Beyond
this they did not care to venture, except for an occasional one such
as Kaweki, who made his living by trapping fish in the forest streams,
and those who came to help him or to carry his fish to the market.
Beyond this point, in Negro eyes, the forest was evil—full of animals, malevolent spirits, and Pygmies.

But for the people of the forest the world began at this point. P 131 484 [126] [135] [515]
There was a stream nearby, just beyond the "plantation," near a
site where I had recorded the forest songs of these same Pygmies*
three years earlier. In this stream, for no obvious reason, each of the
five youths washed carefully, as though literally ridding their very
feet of the dust of the village. Then they splashed through the cool, P [533]
clear water and set off again with even greater vigor than before,

---

* Folkways Records FE 4457, Pygmies of the Ituri Forest
FE 4483, Music of the Ituri Forest

BaNgwana are the most disliked of all the neighboring Negro tribes, 481
and among the Pygmies they are derided particularly because of their 484
slow, ungainly gait, and as being the least able to walk in the forest 186
as you should be able to walk—swiftly, silently, and easily.

Kenge was full of surprises. In spite of the apparent sophistication 484
evidenced by his attachment to Western clothes and scented soap, 224
he still knew his way about the forest better than most Pygmies, and [015]
he certainly had a sharper eye for game. We stopped several times while he and another youth stalked carefully up to a tree where they had seen something. Each time they shot their arrows and stood poised on the balls of their feet, silent and motionless, only to relax and clap their hands in disgust and shake their heads as they explained to each other why they had missed. And each time all I could see of the bird or monkey was a shaking of the branches as it fled in fright.

After about two hours we came to Apa Kadiketu—the Camp of 131
Kadiketu. Nobody was sure who or what Kadiketu was, but that was 484
what the spot had always been called. This was where I had first [114]
lived in a Pygmy camp, and it was strange to pass through the same place now. There was not a sign of a hut; just the faintest outline of what had been a campsite and a slight tangle of undergrowth showing that some clearing had once been done. Kadiketu was not quite halfway to the Lelo River, and we stopped there for a few minutes to have a smoke.

But even while we were resting, squatting on our bundles, Kenge 222
and his friends were looking around. Before we left they made a [114]
quick foraging expedition and returned in as much time as it took me to hitch up my bundle and try to find some way of fastening the tump line so that it relieved my aching shoulders. A typewriter and a load of paper and notebooks wrapped up inside a thick blanket made the load awkward and heavy. Each of my companions had handfuls of mushrooms, great fluffy pink things, fresh and firm.

night, when it is cold, the fire gives not only warmth but protection, 372 484
keeping the animals away.

It was midday when we waded through a marshy patch left by 484 133
recent floods. Usually there is little marsh or swamp, but every now and again dead branches and fallen trees will block a stream and the whole area will be flooded, perhaps for miles, until a heavy rain washes the obstruction away. We had to splash knee-deep through mud and water for several hundred yards before we reached dry land. The first thing Kenge and the others did then was to find the main [515]
stream and wash themselves clean before going any farther.

From here the ground rose steadily and although we could hear streams below us we did not cross any more until just before we got to the Lelo. Up on the ridge the forest was a little thinner, more light filtered through to the ground below, and the world was alive with dancing shadows as the breeze rippled the leaves. But the sun still raised the temperature only to the point where it was pleasantly warm. As we were picking our way down into the Lelo valley we heard distant rumbles of thunder. Kenge stopped and looked up into [821]
the tree tops to see which way the wind was blowing. He muttered that it would not rain yet, but if those lazy women didn't hurry up and come and build the huts we would have a very wet night.

But for the moment the sun was shining, and when we finally 361
arrived at the site for our camp it was bright and green and cheerful. 484
It was a natural clearing a couple of hundred yards across, with a patch of trees and bush in the center breaking up the clearing so that it was really two. As large and as open as it was, the trees still almost met overhead. The ground, instead of being covered with leaves, was covered with a kind of grass. Kenge dumped his bundle on top of a little hillock several yards across and said that this was where we would have our house built. He then told me to come and see the Lelo itself, hinting that I should have a good bath.

Apa Lelo, or the Camp of Lelo, will always be one of the most 361 119

361 beautiful parts of the whole forest for me. This is partly because of
• 114 what happened there, but also because it is one of the places where the forest is at its gentlest and kindest. Even when we left, after a month of heavy rains had turned the campsite into a morass of mud, it was still beautiful, and much as the Pygmies hate a muddy camp they were reluctant to leave. Now, however, all was still green and fresh.

137 Elsewhere the forest can be severe, particularly in the mountain-
132 ous regions; and in many places it is overwhelming in its immensity. The leafy roof where the trees join together can be so far above that you feel as small and insignificant as the other animals roaming the ground below, depending on the forest for life. And at times it can be so powerful that it is frightening. When it whips itself into a fury, conjuring up rain and thunder and lightning, it turns small streams into raging torrents and sends heavy branches or even whole trees crashing down, some of them with trunks as thick as houses, destroying the living trees that stand in their way.

361 But even in a storm Apa Lelo was gentle and kind and protective.
137 Here, somehow, one felt superior to the other animals of the forest. At the far end of the camp, just beyond the hillock where Kenge had said our house was to be built, a path led off to the left through a glade where the smell of leaf mold was rich and cool and moist.
[136] Termites built their nests there, elfin huts of clay with funny mushroom-shaped roofs; small animals scampered about below and birds fluttered lazily overhead. The world at Apa Lelo was full of delicate colors and shades and whispering sounds, and up in the highest branches orchids shyly hid their delicate heads among the moss.

133 This glade was almost an island, as the Lelo swept around it, all
[361] but encircling the camp. The Lelo, the river the Pygmies loved above all others, widened out at the end of its curve into a broad shallow stream, a hundred feet or so across, clear and rippling. When the water was low a bank of shingle rose in the center. In the middle

for a rest took out her knife and went off to cut the branches and 361
leaves needed to built their new home. Njobo shouted after her that 342
she should get enough to build my house as well, saying that we 412
would help her by collecting more leaves. He called to Masisi and [123]
Kenge, and I followed the three of them, wading across the Lelo
and into the forest beyond.

The afternoon was already half spent, and by the light we could 342
tell that the sky was clouding over. Njobo knew where there was a 314
large patch of mongongo leaves. It was some distance off, but if we 48]
hurried we could get there and collect enough for all of us, he said, 114•
looking at me doubtfully. Kenge, ever practical, replied that I had 123
long legs, so surely I would be able to keep up with them, and I [321)
would be useful as I could carry twice as many leaves as all of them
put together. I did keep up, but only just. Because of the time and [487]
the approaching rain they followed small antelope trails instead of
the larger buffalo trails, and in this way kept to a more direct route.
But even they had to stoop as they ran along, and as they did not
bother to cut the branches above their heads I had to go practically
on hands and knees in places. Kenge was in front of me, and every
now and then he warned me by a gesture of a thorny vine, so thorny
that if you run into it unawares it can tear your skin to shreds.

We ran for half an hour without stopping, arriving at a thick growth of mongongo which stretched along the hillside for half a mile or more, down to the banks of the stream below. It was like a forest within a forest, the giant stems ending in the large heart-shaped leaves above our heads.

For a whole hour we cut leaves, working quickly and silently, cut- 314
ting each leaf with a knife in the right hand, leaving a stalk about 114
four inches long, and adding it to a bundle in the left hand. The 123
others had to bend the plants down to reach the leaves, but even so [412]
they quickly accumulated small bundles. When they could hold no
more in their hands they simply put the leaves down on the ground

314 and moved on. Yet when we had cut enough and were at the far
114 edge of the mongongo grove, they knew exactly where each bundle
123 had been put, and retraced their steps gathering the leaves as they
went. Only then, when all the leaves were collected together, did
[222] they relax and talk, and pick a few wild berries with which to refresh
themselves. Then they cut lengths of vine and softened it by
running it quickly from hand to hand, pulling it sharply through the
fork of the thumb. They laughed when I tried this and cut myself.
With this vine they tied up the bundles, gave me the largest, and we
set off on the way back, as fast as we had come.

261 As we came through the glade on the hillside above the Lelo we
114 heard the voices of women and the laughter and shouting of children
from the camp across the river, and when we got down lower and
were wading through the cool stream, washing off all the dirt and
perspiration, we could see long columns of smoke spiraling lazily upward
through the trees. The camp was coming to life.

361 The clearing was full of activity. About twenty families had arrived,
342 and each had already put up the framework of its little house.
Arobanai and Loko, Ekianga's two senior wives, put their houses
side by side at the north end of the camp, leaving a space for
Ekianga and Kamaikan when they came out. Masisi's eldest son,
Agerongo, helped his wife build their house between Masisi's and
Loko's. Old Sau had already almost finished her hut, between my
hillock and Arobanai's but closer to Arobanai, on the far side of the
342 path that led off to the Lelo. Masamba was finishing the frame for
[123] her house; mine was complete, except for a few extra sticks and
[122] leaves needed for the doorway. She had done mine first. Now she
[516] squatted down making her own home, driving the saplings into the
ground with sharp thrusts, each time in exactly the same place, so
that they went deeper and deeper. When she had completed a circle
she stood up and deftly bent the tips over her head, twisting them
together and twining smaller saplings across, forming a lattice frame-

net, just as Maipe had said, but while all the attention was in that 224 [136] direction a water chevrotain, the *sindula*, had tried to fight its way through Moke's net.

The sindula is one of the most prized animals; it is not much larger than a small dog but is dangerous and vicious. Moke's nephew had been left all by himself to deal with it, as the others in that area were helping Ekianga with the sondu. The youngster, probably not much more than thirteen years old, had speared it with his first thrust, pinning the animal to the ground through the fleshy part of the stomach. But the animal was still very much alive, fighting for freedom. It had already bitten its way through the net, and now it was doubled up, gashing the spear shaft with its sharp teeth. Maipe put another spear into its neck, but it still writhed and fought. Not until a third spear pierced its heart did it give up the struggle.

It was at times like this that I found myself furthest removed [114] • [325] from the Pygmies. They stood around in an excited group, pointing at the dying animal and laughing. One boy, about nine years old, threw himself on the ground and curled up in a grotesque heap and imitated the sindula's last convulsions. The men pulled their spears out and joked with one another about being afraid of a little animal like that, and to emphasize his point one of them kicked the torn and bleeding body. Then Maipe's mother came and swept the blood-streaked animal up by its hind legs and threw it over her shoulder into the basket on her back.

At other times I have seen Pygmies singeing feathers off birds 325 [2-23] [2-31] that were still alive, explaining that the meat is more tender if death comes slowly. And the hunting dogs, valuable as they are, get kicked around mercilessly from the day they are born to the day they die. I have never seen any attempt at the domestication of any animal or bird apart from the hunting dog. When I talked to the Pygmies about their treatment of animals, they laughed at me and said, "The forest has given us animals for food—should we refuse this gift and

9

The World of the Village

P
C
114
122
P
C
[134]

I FOUND THE FIRST WEEK back in the village difficult and depressing. During the day the air was hot and dry, and filled with fine particles of dust. At night, when it was cooler, gnats and mosquitoes made me appreciate all the more their absence in the forest. My hut, ten times the size of my home in the hunting camp, seemed close and stuffy, and as I lay in bed I could hear the huge spiders, some several inches across, crawling about in the leaves of the roof. Occasionally one dropped onto the bed with a dull thud and lay there for a while before stalking away. At first I carried out an active campaign to get rid of them, but it was useless—and a mosquito net would have been unbearably hot.

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

P
The familiar night sounds of the forest were replaced by the cries C
of drunks coming home from a dance at the nearby Hotel de Bière, 114
where an antique Victrola ground out records of the African version of 122
the Calypso, imported from the coast. In the Negro village there were C [273]
constant fights—not the wordy fights of the Pygmies, but good [97]
old-fashioned fisticuffs. These were likely to occur at any time of [837]
night, depending on how late it was when an outraged husband, returning from a rendezvous with his current girl friend, reached his own hut to find his wife in bed with someone else.

P
In our small Pygmy village the fires were all brought inside at [372]
night, and the smoke helped to keep away the mosquitoes. The doors [513]
were pulled tight shut, and nobody slept out in the open. Just an [186]
occasional murmured comment on the noise made by "those black savages" was all that was heard, none of the usual cheerful gossip that used to go on every night until, one by one, the hunters fell asleep.

P
But in the very dead of night I could hear the sound of crickets C
from the forest, reminding me that it was, after all, not so far away, 114
and all around us. Sometimes when the moon was full I wandered around the sleeping village, to the edges of the plantations. There the forest stood up into the night like a great black wall, surrounding this small circle, cut so ineffectively out of its very heart. It rose up all around, confident in the knowledge that it would soon claim its
own and grow back more thickly than ever, where it had been cut. C
There were several such abandoned villages nearby, not long abandoned; [361]
yet already the forest towered above them in the unsmiling triumph of inevitability. The forest destroyed everything but its own. Only against the machine age, which had barely reached it, was it powerless.

In the very early hours the forest made itself felt, but close as it 000
was it faded far away with the coming of dawn. The morning sounds of cocks crowing, goats bleating, and the elephants of the Station de

3: Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

C 883| 863 any culture of their own. If the facts were what they seem to be these observations might hold water, but the real facts are very different.

P 881| 179 [114] During my visit to Epulu in 1954, I had the good fortune to stumble quite accidentally upon fresh information, which almost completely reverses the picture. At that time I was present at an nkumbi, which I have already mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, but which merits more detailed description.

C 881| 869 Three years had then elapsed since the previous nkumbi, in 1951, and it was time for another. The purpose of the ceremony is not only to fit village boys for adult life, making them full members of the tribe, but also to ensure the continuity between the past, present and future life of the tribe; between the living and the dead. To the villagers the dead, the ancestors, are just as important as the living, and in many ways more so; and only those who are initiated will join the ancestors when they die. Just as it is important to have a thriving, populous tribe of the living, so is it important to have a thriving, populous tribe of the dead. The dead are, in fact, living—but in another world. Regular initiations are essential to ensure the continued growth of that far-off tribe of ancestors. I have even seen a young boy who had been due to enter the nkumbi but who died just before it took place, circumcised and accorded full initiation rites before burial, just as though he were alive. In this way he was able to go to join his fathers.

C 881| 881| 177 C [524] C [526] P C [528] In 1954 there was a unique situation. There was only one village boy of the right age for initiation (usually between the ages of eight and twelve in this area), and his father was a Christian who refused to allow the boy to participate. Every pressure was brought on the family, but to no avail. There were eight Pygmy boys of suitable age, and normally there would have been at least as many villagers. They would all have been initiated together but in such a way as to make clear the inferior status of the Pygmies. One of the initial acts is the circumcision of the boys, and a Pygmy boy is sent first "to clean the knife."

13

Forest Horizons

TOWARD THE END of my stay at Epulu I felt that it was time to get away to other parts of the forest. I had been with the one hunting group for a year, moving about the forest with them, coming in on their trips to the village, returning with them to their hunting camps. It had been a full year, and the privilege of sharing the life of this group had begun to tell. Living so closely it was impossible not to begin to see the world as they saw it; sharing their pleasures and sorrows made it impossible not to feel as they did; and just being with a people so filled with the love of the forest made it impossible not to love as they did. The more I wanted to stay with them, and them alone, the more I knew it was time to move. 114

31 Turnbull E-5 (1951-1958) 1962 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti
Congo-Kinshasa FO1

P 114 I asked Kenge if he would like to come with me and was not surprised when he packed off Maliamo to stay with his mother. Nothing would have stopped Kenge from making our projected tour of the forest. We decided to circle the area by following the road around the fringes, stopping wherever it seemed expedient and setting off by foot. P [122] I took a supply of notebooks and pencils, a typewriter, and a couple of changes of clothes. Kenge not only brought two changes of clothes, specially purchased at the local store for the P [186] occasion, but also a huge old charcoal-heated flatiron. He said that we would probably be going through large cities and meeting big people, and he wanted to show them that we were not savages.

Our first stop was the headquarters of the BaNdaka chief, at the village of Bafwakoa. It was a comfortable day's drive, and we arrived late in the afternoon, having stopped at almost every village on the way. The news of our coming had gone before us, in the strange way that news travels in Africa, from village to village. When we reached Bafwakoa, Chief Kachui was sitting out on his veranda waiting to greet us, surrounded by his official advisers and some of his family.

C {22 563} Kachui was an old man, and a leper, and he knew enough of Europeans not to offer to shake hands with strangers. But we had met several times before, and he clasped both my hands warmly in P 115 123 his and made me sit down beside him. I introduced Kenge as a friend, and with great aplomb the powerful old man called for another chair to be brought. This was the first time, I am sure, that such an honor had been done a Pygmy by this severe and conventional chief. We talked a long while. I made it quite plain that he could talk freely in front of Kenge, and he did so. He said that he "owned" several hundred Pygmies, and they were really more trouble than they were worth. "Here it is, time for the cotton crop to be brought in, and P [illegible] still I can not get the Pygmies to come back from the forest. They say the hunting is too good, but if it is, then why do I get no meat?

For the next few days we stayed there, and then we moved on 114
from camp to camp, visiting the six or seven hunting groups in the 424
neighborhood. Toward the end we found that we were only a day's march away from Kaweki's fishing camp, and another day would have put us at the Epulu River. So we turned about and slowly made our way back.

Once we had become known to the first group we were accepted 609
wherever we went as a matter of course. Kenge, who had been ex- 784
tremely shy and rather nervous in the Mabudu villages, refusing to eat the food they offered him, was once more his old self. He exploited to the utmost what was for him as well as for our hosts a novel situation. Generally Pygmies travel only within their own area and among groups that they know and in which they have relatives. There was a great deal of curiosity on both sides, but it was mainly concerned with the villagers—what kind of people they were and how easily they were tricked. The Pygmies that we spent the most time with in this region visited the villages only rarely, some of them had never seen a European before, and none of them had met a Pygmy from the other side of the forest. They examined both of
us with attention. They pitied me for my height, which made me 609
so clumsy, and they laughed at the hair on my arms and legs, which 123
they said was like that of a monkey. A pink face peeking out from 186
behind a beard added to the similarity, and it became a standard 826
joke among them, much to Kenge's annoyance. He felt that it [825]
lowered his own status.

For me the trip was mainly work—visiting different groups and 609
taking copious notes about each. But for Kenge it was an experience [173]
beyond all imagination. Not only was he able to meet other groups of his fellow BaMbuti, and many different tribes of villagers, but he saw different kinds of Europeans—missionaries, businessmen, movie-makers, "white hunters," and others. We visited the town of Paulis; it was only a small town, but the biggest that Kenge had seen, and

C 797 169 P 179 and most beautiful voice of what a terrible experience we had been through the night before. Meanwhile, I found myself in the company of the kindest, wisest, and most sincere person I had met in this part of Africa.

After he had seen that I did justice to an enormous breakfast he took me down to look at the new church he was building. Moslems and pagans worked side by side with Christians, breaking rocks on the mountainside, carrying them to the site, squaring them and heaving them into place. All this help was voluntary; Father Longo paid the workers whenever he was able, which was all that was expected. It was done willingly because over the years the people of the surrounding villages had come to know Father Longo for the man he was. He was not concerned simply with adding a lot of names to his roll of converts but primarily with living a life that would be an example that others would want to follow. He made everyone equally welcome at his mission, regardless of religion. Some months later, when the new church was finished, it was consecrated at a service made all the more beautiful by dozens of his Pygmy friends, who came in from the forest carrying gifts of forest fruits and flowers and danced their pagan way up the aisle. They were filled with as much joy and devotion as Father Longo himself.

P 114 C 184 691 We came to know the Pygmies in the neighborhood of Ndoye well, but in spite of our initial setback with Chief Lupao we still wanted to make some contact with the BaLese. Father Longo suggested that we try the other powerful Lese chief, Nakubai, whose village was a number of miles to the north. We followed his advice, and Nakubai did everything he could to reverse our opinion of his people. He was not only hospitable, but he understood when I said that we wanted to visit his Pygmies without the restraint of having a villager along with us. Whereas Kachui and others had insisted on keeping us under constant surveillance, Nakubai even said that we would probably see far more if we went on our own. As a result we had one of our most fruitful treks of all, learning many new and important things about the forest people.

P 114 C 184 609

The terrain was very different from that of Epulu, being mountainous and rocky, with jagged boulders sticking out of the ground at crazy angles as though some great city had once been swallowed by an earthquake. But even on the steepest escarpments, where the huge trees seemed to grow out of the very rocks, the Pygmies moved as quickly and surely and silently as elsewhere. For the first time I saw Kenge in difficulty, he being as unused to this kind of mountaineering as I was. But we were anxious to press inward as far as we could, and once again we found ourselves almost back at the Epulu; it lay about two days to the southwest at most.

P 133 484 P [481]

While we were in this part of the forest we heard many stories of the old wars between the various tribes of villagers, as they invaded the forest, and how the Pygmies got caught between them so that they were forced to side with one group or another.

P 173 648 C [721]

On leaving Nduye we continued southward, past the administrative center of Mambasa, and when we had crossed the Ituri, which at this higher point was, in Kenge's words, "a mere child," we once more left the car and began walking. At the end of a day, having passed through three deserted Pygmy villages, we were beginning to feel dubious at the wisdom of having come so far without a guide when we came to the banks of a large tributary of the Ituri. There, to our mutual surprise, was one of the legendary vine bridges, slung high up over the swirling waters, suspended by lianas fastened to the topmost branches of the trees on either bank. I was glad that Kenge was amazed, because there is every reason to believe that these bridges, contrary to the information supplied by romantically minded movie-makers, are not of Pygmy origin. To cross the bridge we climbed up a series of logs leading to a fork in the tree to which our end of the bridge was anchored, and from there we made our swaying way across. Kenge refused to look down, and when I stopped in the

P 133 361 [222] P 491

491 middle to get a better view of the way the supporting lianas were fastened, he urged me on, saying that it was not natural to be standing there in the middle of the air over a dangerous river.

• 114 On the far side we came to a camp, and there we found some relatives of the Epulu Pygmies, including one girl who was well known to us both—Makubasi's first wife.

797
177 We stayed there for the night and then moved on up a trail that led to the Protestant mission of Biasiku. This was headed by an American missionary, the Reverend Charles Bell, and his wife. They had been in the Ituri for about as long as Father Longo and Pat Putnam had. As soon as they heard that we were staying in the camp down by the river they made arrangements for us to stay at the mission, and without knowing that we were on our way Mr. Bell set out on foot to issue the invitation in person. I had a special reason for accepting it; I wanted Kenge to have a fair notion of the way different missions operated. I certainly had no desire to see him converted, but having given him a taste of missions it seemed fair that he should have an all-round picture, and earlier during our trip we had had an unfortunate experience with a different Protestant mission.

At that mission prayers were said in public about five times a day, mention always being made of any converts who might be ill, however slightly. Prayers were also made requesting the Almighty to provide a road into the forest so that the mission could have easier access to the Pygmies, and thanks were offered for a new automobile that had been acquired. All this was perfectly understandable to the villagers, with their own tradition of witchcraft. They merely thought this a particularly powerful form of magic. Kenge was skeptical. "How is their god going to put a road into the forest when the white man can't do it?" he asked.

But one day, while we were there, a wounded Pygmy was brought in. He had been gored while hunting and was groaning with pain.

62 be very glad if I came to their camp; I would find it less noisy than Ekianga's.

I asked Kenge what he wanted to do, and without hesitation he said he was going to follow Masisi. Maipe was his half-brother, and a very good friend of his, but his main reason, he said, was that he was tired of noise. He knew that Masisi's camp would be a quiet one, with lots and lots of singing and dancing. To the Pygmy, noise is synonymous with trouble, with dispute and discontent; music is [114] never referred to as noise, but rather as "rejoicing." I felt that Kenge was right, and we decided to follow the next day.

114 It was, I knew, to be my last trek into the forest with the people I had come to think of as such close friends, and even though I still had another two months to spend with them I was sad. It was partly because of this, and partly because, like Kenge, I was so profoundly content to be back in our own part of the forest, that I found the forest more beautiful than it had ever been. Kenge said it was just because it was the honey season, but as we passed the plantation and entered once more into the shade of the great friendly old trees, he added, "This is the *real* world . . . this is a good world, our forest."

We walked slowly, enjoying every minute. We passed through the plantation that Njobo and Masisi had begun to cultivate more than a year and a half earlier, and found it a ruin, happily abandoned for more worthwhile things. We skirted Apa Mubeko because Kenge said Cephu had camped there recently and it would be full of jiggers. In the deserted remains of Apa Kadiketu we stopped for a rest, sitting on a log that had once resounded to the hammering of ivory barkcloth beaters. I thought of the great molimo songs that had been sung there, and wondered if I would hear them again before I left. Beyond Apa Kadiketu we followed the path to Apa Lelo, almost to the spot where I had once seen a leopard crouching up in the trees above me. There we turned west, following an animal trail that was narrow and tangled. It led through hilly country completely new to one and finally brought us down to a swampy region, dark and dank. 114 A stream flowed through the middle, fed by innumerable tiny rivulets from the hills all around. We picked our way across, balancing on fallen tree trunks and jumping from log to log. As we began to climb a steep hill on the far side I heard the telltale sound of bark cloth being pounded into shape, the cheerful chattering of women as they called to each other while they finished the building of their huts, and an occasional outburst of song, sung for no other reason than that this was the honey season, the season to be happy, the season to rejoice. Kenge gave a loud whoop of pleasure and darted [152] among the trees like a young antelope, leaping and bounding out of sight. When I reached the clearing he was already sitting down, his face buried in a sticky mongongo leaf dripping with rich brown honey. He looked up and laughed.

The camp was called Apa Toangbe, the *toangbe* being a special 361 kind of honey tree. It was built halfway up a fairly high hill, on a [illegible] patch of ground that was not quite level. Masisi's house was at the highest point of the tiny clearing, with Asofalinda to one side and Maipe's mother to the other. Masamba had built a house that virtually joined onto that of Masisi. Mine was halfway up the slope on the other side, facing across to Maipe. It was all ready when we arrived, the only one completely finished. Masisi proudly led me to it and inspected it with me. He had built the bed himself, carefully [352] refraining from turning the ends of the branches up sharply as Pygmies seem to think should be done, so that the bed becomes the shape of a hammock without any of its back-saving resilience.

It was not thirty feet from one side of the camp to the other, and 000 the forest closed in a protective wall all around us. Kenge and I set off to see what the surrounding country was like, and soon we were far beyond the sounds of any voices other than our own. Everywhere we went we saw mushrooms and nuts and berries, and we collected

621 of me. Masisi, still breathing fire and fury about the treachery of his relatives, came to visit us from time to time; otherwise he kept strictly to his own camp.

221 621 And so, after the Pygmies had taken advantage of the one season they know, a season which allows them to forget about the cares of communal hunting and the need for constant cooperation, the camp was beginning to come together again. Every year this splitting up takes place, and every year the forest draws its people back together. Whatever frictions had existed were soon healed; a new year was about to begin. Before this camp ended, Masisi would have found some excuse to move a little farther north. Ekianga was already talking of shifting a few hundred yards south, and Cephu would make up his mind to jump this way or that. Everyone knew it, and within a week of arriving at Apa Kadiketu they were talking about where they would build their next camp, and how it would be one camp again—until the next honey season.

184 But I would never know that next camp, so I made the most of my last home in the forest, sharing it as always with a good and constant friend. Maliamo set up house in Masisi's camp, and sometimes Kenge stayed there, sometimes in the main camp. At all times the forest was full of the song and dance of life. The games special to 221 524 526 the honey season filled the daylight hours and at dusk there was the dance of the honeybees. Tremendous vine swings were slung from the highest branches, and on these the youths practiced their acrobatics, leaping and somersaulting in the air. When a vine broke it was used for interminable games of tug of war, men against women. But there was a conspicuous lack of gallantry in this particular game, for if either side saw that it was losing ground it sent a saboteur into the other ranks. It is difficult to concentrate on pulling at a line 221 525 when someone is flirting with you—as Pygmies do. But best of all was the dance. Once again the men and the women divided, and

while the men pretended to be honey gatherers, dancing in a long 221
curling line through the camp, looking up with exaggerated gestures 535
as if searching for some sign of bees, the women danced in another long line through the trees at the edge of the camp, pretending they were the bees. The two lines gradually came closer and closer together, the women singing in a soft, rhythmic buzz, buzz, buzz, while the men pretended to hear but still not to see them. Then the women seized burning logs of wood and attacked the men, tapping the logs on their heads so that a shower of sparks fell over them,
stinging them like the sting of the honeybee. At that they all gathered [572]
up the embers, and where some of the younger men had been building an elaborate hearth of special woods and special leaves, moistened to just the right extent, they lit the great honey fire. There was
no flame, but dense clouds of smoke billowed upward. Men blew [304]
on their honey whistles, women clapped their hands, and everyone burst into the song of magic that would travel with the smoke and call the bees to come and make more honey.

On such occasions I found that Masisi and Cephu made their ap- 621
pearance more and more often, paving the way for a reunion at the next camp. When the time came for me to leave all animosities had been forgotten.

One day Kenge had gone off on some unknown mission and I 114
decided to make a final pilgrimage to Apa Lelo, where the cycle had begun. This day of all days I wanted to be by myself, but there is something about the forest, not exactly threatening, but challenging, that dares you to travel alone. I had to refuse several Pygmies who wanted to come with me, and once I was well away I was glad. I knew what the challenge was, for to be alone was as though you were daring to look on the face of the great God of the Forest himself, so overpowering was the goodness and beauty of the world all around. Every trembling leaf, every weathered stone, every cry of an animal

● 114 or chirp of a cricket tells you that the forest is alive with some presence.

As I splashed my way through the last stream and climbed to the top of the rise above Apa Lelo, the sounds of the forest grew louder. This was a friendly sign, but somehow it made me feel even more lonely. Then I came down into the old camp. The huts were rotted and collapsed, the clearing overgrown. As I roamed about, tracing where huts had been and remembering who had lived there, kicking idly with my feet in the hopes of finding some familiar object, it all began to live again. I wandered down to the Lelo, as calm and placid and beautiful as ever, and I thought of the molimo. As I looked into the waters where the trumpet had once been hidden, it was as if I heard its voice in the distance, gentle but insistent.

181 When I had bade my farewell to that very special river and returned to the camp, I saw it as it really was in the timelessness of the forest world—the huts strong and green, the fires burning brightly, and the air heavy with the scent of cooking. Lisabeti was running about with the other children, swinging happily on her crutches. The men helped one another to examine and repair their nets, while the women cooked and gossiped. Masisi was shouting at someone, and Manyalibo was trying to pacify him in his usual gruff, good-natured way. Old Moke sat back in his chair and puffed at his pipe, gazing up at the tree tops so very high above. I heard him murmur once [778] more, "You will see things you have never seen before. . . . You will understand why we are called People of the Forest. . . . When the Forest dies, we shall die." And for the last time I heard the chorus of that great song of praise: "If Darkness *is*, Darkness is Good."

000 The camp and the people disappeared, leaving only a shimmering haze over Apa Lelo, but the song remained, for the song is the soul of the people and the soul of the forest. The molimo trumpet, now

About the Author

COLIN M. TURNBULL *was born in London, and now lives in New York City. He was educated at Westminster School and at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he studied philosophy and politics. After serving in the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve during the war, he held a research grant for two years in the Department of Indian Religion and Philosophy at Benares Hindu University, in India, and then returned to Oxford, where he studied anthropology, specializing in the African field.* 114

He has made three field trips to Africa, the last of which was

[P. 297]

114 *spent mainly in the then Belgian Congo, from 1957 to 1958.*

Mr. Turnbull is now on the staff of the Department of Anthropology of the American Museum of Natural History, in charge of African Ethnology. He is also a Fellow of the British Royal Anthropological Institute and a Corresponding Member of Le Musée Royale d'Afrique Centrale.

[p 298]

4: Putnam E-5 (no date) 1948 FO4 Pygmies FO4
Mbuti

114 [2.8] * Putnam has been living with the people of whom he speaks for nearly two decades. He dictated to me a somewhat longer story of pygmy life, which I have condensed to its present compass. He went over the copy carefully and made corrections. He is not satisfied with it, and has gone back to learn more. Meanwhile he is willing to let you read what follows. This material has never before been published.

[P 322-D]